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Volume 3
1969–1972 The Politics of Representation

An anthology from *Cahiers du Cinéma* nos 210–239,
March 1969-June 1972

Edited by
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Preface

The project for an anthology of writing from *Cahiers du Cinéma* in the immediate post-1968 period arose in response to the changing place of film in American culture in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and to the transformative effect of French film theory on film study in America. The project came together in 1976, when with the encouragement of Professor Stanley Cavell and the Harvard University Press, an agreement to proceed was reached with Serge Daney, then Editor-in-Chief of *Cahiers*. Subsequently, with the decision of the British Film Institute to undertake a multi-volume anthology covering the history of *Cahiers*, this volume was incorporated in that series.

Volume 3 has been carried out in full agreement with Jim Hillier's general statement of policy for the series in his Preface to the first two volumes: 'that each volume should be self-contained and coherent in its own terms, should seek to be representative of the period covered, should contain largely material not readily available before in English translation, should be relevant to contemporary film education and film culture, should be accessible to the non-specialist reader, and should be pleasurable.' The materials contained in this volume may be different from Volumes 1 and 2 in their accessibility and their conditions of pleasure. In this period *Cahiers* sought explicitly to integrate the post-structuralist perspectives of the wider French cultural and intellectual scene, intermixing narratology, grammatology, semiotics, Marxism, and psychoanalysis. Thus a number of these texts are 'difficult'.

The introductory essay undertakes to situate this work within the general intellectual scene, to analyse the *Cahiers* project, and thus to make it more available. The material is presented chronologically. Overall, the aims of the volume are: first, to present essential materials for a historical reconstruction of the intellectual dynamic of the period; and second, to gauge *Cahiers'* contribution to the formation of contemporary film theory.

A note on translations

Translation always poses problems about accurate rendition, especially when, as in this case, several different translators are involved and when the original writing is difficult. It would be wrong to pretend that we have not experienced occasionally quite severe problems of translation. There are a number of points where we have had difficulty in grasping the precise sense of the original and others where, despite such a grasp, the right translation has been difficult to find.

The French terms *auteur* and *mise en scène* have entered critical discussion in English, but *auteur* in particular did not always have some of the meanings currently attached to it. We have usually retained *auteur* when 'author' would have been a direct translation and *mise en scène* where 'direction' might have been a suitable rendering, but we have tried to be sensitive to the varying usage of the terms. The same principle has been applied to such theoretical terms as *écriture* for which there is no adequate translation.

Les Cahiers du Cinéma (literally 'Cinema Notebooks') are plural, but we have preferred to refer to *Cahiers* – the normal abbreviation used – as if in the singular.

Notes

All notes are the editor's except where specifically designated as authors' or translators' notes.

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Introduction: The Politics of Representation: *Cahiers du Cinéma* 1969–72

What is dramatized in this collection of texts from the 1969–72 period of *Cahiers du Cinéma* is the spectacular action of rigorous and politically engaged film criticism. *Cahiers'* central project was to elaborate a method of, or a critical perspective on, filmic 'writing' considered in its social relations. By means of a form of critical 'reading', *Cahiers* sought to analyse and to transform the relation between film-texts and the ideology of the culture in which they are viewed.

In the context of the radically charged social and intellectual movements of post-1968 France, *Cahiers du Cinéma* was at work transforming both the perception of films and critical writing about cinema. *Cahiers* set about clarifying its historical and polemical co-ordinates by reference to Bazin and Eisenstein, and self-consciously began the process of shaping the passage from the old to the new socio-filmic order by the force of its critical intervention. Its resolutely Marxist denunciation of the function and effect of bourgeois ideology was projected as the critique and rewriting of film history/theory/criticism.

The experience of change in post-1968 France marks these texts in multiple ways. Change is pictured as an opened theoretical space, the space of representation. History assumes the aspect of an ensemble of unevenly developed, stratified and shifting relations enacted in a new social setting. Old connections are broken or displaced; new structures and commitments are in the process of emerging. The sense of uneven, fragmented movement of diverse but associated themes makes the ensemble of these texts an unfinished work site. In this context, montage is pictured as an exemplary mode of critical work. Through its procedures of writing it rearranges significant relations, transforms pre-texts (the culturally and normally invested fields of fixed senses), interrupts and renegotiates notions of liaison and continuity. Its deconstructive form of productivity is the result of both action and negation.

Cahiers' intervention within this cultural setting of change and mutation takes the dialectical form of a writing project – arbitrating between old and new, structure and history. It challenges the presuppositions about the relation of film theory to the social order by affirming the centrality of the dialectic between ideology and representation. *Cahiers* joins the struggle on this front: its principal interlocutor and antagonist is the figure of dominant ideology as instituted by the bourgeois apparatus of cinema. *Cahiers* undertakes by its writing to disqualify the institution of Classic Representation and to create a new and transformed social space. The discourse of film theory and criticism that effects this passage from old to new is at the same time drama (spectacle), argument (exposition), dialectic (movement, determination, spacing, ultimately history) and action (intervention for political change).

Notwithstanding the sense of a project still in motion, a project collectively developed through the organization of several voices, the *Cahiers* materials assembled here have a structure and an argument. As a monthly review, its theories and positions were elaborated and modified, even deflected, over the course of publication. Its form of cohesion is historical. The unity, such as it is, of the *Cahiers* project is defined through the question of how social life is represented at the ideological level. The object of the project is the critique and transformation of society's ideological superstructure in so far as it is supported by cinema. The questions that *Cahiers* puts to cinema and that define film theory/criticism are finally treated as political questions – of power, class struggle, and theoretical practice. As a text, this collection of *Cahiers* writings is composed by the integration and displacement of key terms, each embedded in a context: 'writing', 'reading', 'ideology', 'subject', 'history'. In so far as its perspective is the transformation of existing structures, the *Cahiers* project is defined as a politics, not a poetics, of representation.

The materials presented here are basically from the period March 1969 to January 1972. This framework registers the force and effect of the political events of May 1968 on the institution of cinema. Though a crisis within *Cahiers* in November 1969 led to a change in ownership, during the period which this volume principally covers (October 1969 to February 1972) the Editorial Board, directed by Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, remained virtually unchanged. This phase concluded, more or less, in January 1972 with the open break with the French Communist Party, and an alignment with Maoism. Shortly afterwards, the format of the review changed, declaring a reorientation towards its public.

Cahiers' engagement in the central cultural politics of the time, and its commitment to a cultural line founded on dialectical materialism, is reflected in its various relations – attack, defence, and affiliation – to the intellectual scene. Reconstruction of the form and significance of its intervention as film theory must in fact take into account *Cahiers'* relation to other positions and other texts: historical precedents, rival critical practices, contemporary supporters, its guiding texts. The break with the critical past, represented, of course, by the 'idealist' tradition of André

Bazin, prompts the retrieval of Eisenstein as a guiding reference. Eisenstein's framework of dialectical materialism as the basis for aesthetic inquiry serves to link *Cahiers'* project with the revolutionary Russian intellectual and artistic culture of the 1920s. The Eisenstein translation project consisted of fifteen instalments (from February 1969 to January-February 1971) and culminated in issues devoted to revolutionary Russian film culture (May-June 1970) with texts by and commentary on Vertov, Lenin, Eisenstein, Mayakovsky, Meyerhold, Kuleshov, etc., and a special Eisenstein issue (January-February 1971). The Editorial Board's 'Russia in the Twenties' indicates the significance and aims of the overall project and shows the way in which *Cahiers* sought to appropriate Eisenstein, and Russian practice more generally, to the contemporary situation.

Within the post-1968 scene, *Cahiers* sought, by various means, to elaborate and extend its position. The differences between *Cahiers* and *Cinéthique*, for example, were made explicit in its polemical 'refutation' of *Cinéthique* published in November 1969. *Cahiers* shared with *Cinéthique* the view that the social function of cinema is the reproduction of bourgeois ideology, that film is disguised work product, that mode of address can constitute a break with bourgeois norms, etc. But *Cahiers* rejected an aesthetics of transgression, based on the self-reflexive practice of the avant-garde, and developed, through painstaking analysis, its own account of the formal terms of such a break.

Positif's attack (no. 122, December 1970) on *Cahiers*, structuralism, and the literary/cultural review *Tel Quel* was a broadside. An article attacked *Cahiers'* positive evaluation of Straub-Huillet's *Othon* and denounced the review as totalitarian, opportunist, Stalinist, elitist, a pretender to scientific criticism. *Cinéthique*, *Tel Quel*, and *Cahiers* joined in a statement ('Cinema, literature, politics', January-February 1971) denouncing *Positif* for a 'parasitism' that aimed to censor and deform a scientific Marxist-Leninism. What seems to be at stake in these exchanges is the legitimacy and authority of *Cahiers'* collective voice to assume and command centre stage, to take a public position, and to speak for the truth of a scientific Marxist-Leninist discourse in the field of film.

The overall aim of this volume is to present the material essential to defining the ensemble of themes and positions that compose the history of *Cahiers* during the 1969–72 period. The volume provides the fundamental materials for a critical appreciation of the *Cahiers* position in contemporary film theory and criticism. Even though *Cahiers* drew heavily on many sources and fields which constituted the context of the *Cahiers* project (including work by Burch, Barthes, Bellour, Metz, etc.), this 'independent' material is present only by implication or reference and is in most instances available in translation elsewhere. We are publishing only primary materials from *Cahiers* which are not readily available. Hence, the widely reprinted text on *Young Mr Lincoln* (*Cahiers* 223, August-September 1970) is not included here.

We are presenting this material in its scope and diversity, and in its original sequence. Since *Cahiers* in this period treated history as a fundamental category (and even theorized its own history in the concept of uneven heterogeneous succession), and because its specific mode of critical writing as a periodical, and to some extent even its power as a coherent project, depends on this mode of appearance and presentation, we have maintained the original order. But, moreover, this order is the form that the *Cahiers* project takes, as drama, within its historical setting.

The publication of these materials from the late 1960s, bearing signs of 'May '68' in France, twenty years after their original appearance, is a notable instance of the spatialization of the history and politics of cultural criticism and theory in the field of film. The sense of both familiarity and strangeness that is likely to characterize the contemporary reception of these materials – and the sense of their significance – is probably shaped both by their initial cultural inscription and, more generally, by their place in the historical transformation of the project of Western film theory and film studies. These materials have been recognized as seminal documents in defining more or less systematically an approach to the cinema based on an analysis of the specific, social force of ideology in relation to the patterns of significance of the film text.

Historically speaking, it is not possible to detach this theoretical intervention into ideological study and action from its own cultural and political context. Sylvia Harvey's *May '68 and Film Culture* (British Film Institute, 1978) underlines and documents the major determining relations between the larger political scene and film culture. For Harvey, the Langlois affair of February, the 'movement' at the Universities, the Parisian street battles, the occupation of factories, the massive demonstrations, the nationwide strike of students and workers against the De Gaulle regime in May '68 were the main events leading to the dramatization and the politicization of the cultural sphere. The precipitating event was the student protest at the University of Nanterre – against the war in Vietnam, and against the bureaucratic and authoritarian structures at the University. The alliance between this emerging student movement and the interests of the Communist Party-influenced trade unions, and the resulting conflict with the government, opened the way to a national political debate on the question of social reform – or revolution.

Within the film world the 'Estates General of Cinema' functioned as a broad-based forum for the debate – a debate essentially over the cinematic forms of opposition to the specific cultural apparatuses of the media, and more generally, to the capitalist state. The terms of the larger debate translated into the film world with several affective/political themes of liberation and change: workers' control of certain sectors of film production, development of alternative structures of production and distribution, increasing access to knowledge of and skills in the techniques of cinema, the end of state censorship and the reconstruction of the mainstream forms. The editors of *Cahiers* participated in these discussions and actively took up in its analysis the concept of alternative distribution structures, and oppositional artistic practices.

In the nearly twenty years since the original publication in French of these materials, much has changed within English-language film culture. It goes almost without saying that the world in which film and film study are embedded has also changed. Wars have ended, political and social movements dispersed, relations between world powers altered, new media environments established. The main cultural registers in which the changes in the discourses on film can be figured, in relation to these contexts, indicate the various ways that the *Cahiers* writing of the 1969–72 period stood at a point of transition and transformation. The writing eclipsed traditional auteurism and assimilated for its own account the various strands of French structuralism – including that of the 'first semiotics'. In its integration and deployment of the larger framing discourses of psychoanalysis, Marxism and, more cautiously, deconstruction, *Cahiers* took up what is now recognizable as the privileged themes of post-structuralism – the critique of representation – premised on the distinctively Althusserian ideological critique. That is, *Cahiers* broke with the immanent categories and premises of formalist and structuralist description and situated itself within the larger Freudian-Marxian intellectual culture (in its Lacanian/Althusserian formulations) in relation to its assumed task of social transformation. It framed the question of its new 'politique' of engagement as a matter of ideological critique. Arguably, it is this distinctive ideological perspective on film, in relation to the other arts, to authorship, to film history, to technology, to culture generally, that constitutes *Cahiers'* chief legacy to contemporary film studies.

To a certain extent, within English-language film culture this is understood. However, in the 1970s the most prominent and decisive editorial voice by which the project of an ideological critique of film was advanced in English was that of the British journal *Screen*. *Screen*'s own break and theoretical reconstitution along the lines of a project for the 'development and criticism of theoretical ideas' (recounted by John Ellis in *Screen Reader I: Cinema/Ideology/Politics*, 1977) culminated in Spring 1971. In the next year *Screen* translated and published two major *Cahiers* texts, 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism' and 'Young Mr Lincoln', as well as important contributions by *Cinéthique*. Indeed, these two *Cahiers* texts, with the addition of Oudart's 1969 'Suture' article (published in *Screen*, Winter 1977–8), and Comolli's text 'Technique and Ideology' (though not published by *Screen*) are probably the most widely known texts of *Cahiers* in English-language film studies. These articles are the ones that have been most widely anthologized and discussed. *Screen*'s acknowledgment of *Cahiers* during this formative period, as well as its own independent dynamic, is indicated through its theoretical agenda as characterized by Ellis' collection of *Screen* from the period 1971–2 – the critique of auteurism, realism, technology, the cinema institution, the articulation cinema/ideology/politics, the rewriting of the history of cinema, and a re-examination of the Russian revolutionary cinema of the 1920s. That is, with the rough parallelism of *Screen* and *Cahiers* during the early 70s, *Screen* mediated the *Cahiers* texts and its theoretical/political agenda for the English-speaking audience. As *Screen*'s own work took on an international quality with occasional American contributions, and with its amplified consideration of both textual analysis and feminist film theory, it dominated much of the serious English-language discussion of film and politics, film and culture. The result, in some ways surprising, is that in regard to the formation of the film studies canon, the work of *Cahiers* of this period is available primarily through the translation of just four articles, variously anthologized. Nonetheless, in their English versions these papers – by advancing in fresh terms the force of the ideological critique – have often been decisive in Anglo-American contexts.

The form and consequence of the adoption/appropriation of the *Cahiers* mode of film analysis was mediated a second time, by the politics and the formation of graduate departments of critical study of film and television in the United States. In general, the transformation of the traditional *Cahiers*, the general expansion of recognition and writing on cinema, and the emergence of these departments arose at roughly the same time – in the late 60s and the early 70s – in both France and the United States. Their emergence owed something to the experience of a university intellectual life challenged by the major social and political upheavals of the period – pre-eminently the war in Vietnam, emergent minorities, and an acknowledgment of the new place and significance accorded to film, and also to television, within the culture. The conflict over the reception and interpretation of these kinds of texts in universities along with structural analysis and semiotics – that is, the sharp challenge they put to the more traditional humanistic forms of study – tended to repeat in a different register the contestational character of the circumstances of their production. The new home and sponsor of this critical project became the university in so far as particular departments resonated with the excitement of discovering a new popular art that might sustain more democratic, and even the oppositional, values of the times. Hence these texts are both beneficiaries and victims of the rememoration and re-interpretation of the 1960s in Western countries. Their displacement and re-spatialization through these intervening decades brings them back to the university – oddly as a kind of return, but with a difference. Their contemporary reception at the university, and more generally in the culture, is bound to retrace a complex path from their original political inscription within the high post-structuralisms to the commodified intensities of Jameson's 'post-modern' media culture of the simulacrum.

Today, these texts call for presentation and systematic re-interpretation along two main axes. The materials necessary for an account of *Cahiers*' overall project, its arguments, the terms of its coherence, its internal development, have not been made available before in English. The publication of a few, now much celebrated, texts has obscured the total body.

In this sense, strangely, the project of republication in its density and overall shape is an archaeological one, one crucial to reconstituting and understanding the intellectual dynamic of the period in the field of film in its immediate and concrete relation to the larger project of social transformation in France at the end of the 60s. Inasmuch as this aim was actively theorized, we can see more generally in this collection the process of elaborating a theory of film rooted in a specific cultural context. Simultaneously, by putting the texts in historical relation to each other, this volume provides the materials for both discovering and articulating a more complex internal history of *Cahiers*, but also for understanding the formation and transformation of film theory as a whole – in relation to Eisenstein, Bazin, to *Screen*, and to American discourses on film.

Historiographically speaking, these texts constitute and dramatize a crucial moment – the precipitation of the dominant paradigm of post-structuralism in the field of film. *Cahiers* advances complex and widely influential accounts of the categories of both subject and representation. In its efforts to construct a film theory through a critique of the realism of classic film and through its definition of the progressive modern text in its materiality, and by its adoption of ideological critique in an age of increasingly intensive commodification in the media field, *Cahiers* takes up an ambiguous but important place in the continuing shift of problematics from authorship to the post-structuralisms to cultural studies and post-modernisms. Ambiguous, because on, or even against, the historical scene of the popular culture of late capitalism, it prized a rigorous, elitist aesthetic of textuality. Ambiguous too because its project for a 'politique' brought together the modernist aesthetic derived from a materialist interpretation of the Russian avant-garde with the psychoanalytic, Althusserian, and Derridian currents of French post-structuralist method. It thus constitutes an illustrative paradigm of the re-territorialization of the languages and spaces of contemporary cultural theory and criticism.

The theory of representation

The 'theoretical' texts of *Cahiers*, those that treat 'cinema' in general – its ontology, its typical figures, its historical significance – take as their central point of reference the cinematic 'impression of reality'. The critique of filmic representation is concentrated on the structure and significance of this general effect. To be sure, the analysis of filmic realism is elaborated through detailed study of the status of the filmic image and the form it assumes in diverse practices that emerge in varying social conditions. Such specific analyses serve to ground, extend and test more general formulations.

The critique of filmic representation takes the general form of an analysis of the 'impression of the real' from ontological, social and historical vantage points. It is finally a search for knowledge about the historical 'truth' of cinematic representation. There is in equal measure a consideration in these texts of the relation of the image to the profilmic material and, through syntax and fantasy, between the image and the spectator. *Cahiers'* inquiry into this double set of relations, referent-image/discourse-spectator, considered in the context of the force and effect of ideology, sets in motion the general critique of cinematic representation.

What emerges is a concept of bourgeois ideology as a global and comprehensive network of representations and meanings in which objects, facts and subject positions assume their place within the demands and requirements of a capitalistic order. The contesting by the post-1968 *Cahiers* of Bazin's description of the relation between the image and the real and the spectator and the filmic image – of transparency to things themselves and an opportunity for selection – is explicitly conducted in the language of a politics of illusionism. Ideology, *Cahiers* asserts, functions to ensure the reproduction of the social order presented in a certain determined way. The illusion generated by and constituting the cinema, the 'impression' or 'effect' of the real, is thus transformed by the new *Cahiers* into the site of a complex ideological analysis linked to the project of transforming the cinema institution and the audience's relation to it. Indeed, representation, ideology, and spectator position are defined together. Through a critique of the naive status often accorded the visible, *Cahiers* attacks the tenets of an earlier, phenomenologically grounded film criticism like that of Bazin and Mitry. The *Cahiers* of 1969–72 promotes theory – Althusser, Lacan, and Derrida – as the way for apprehending with methodological rigour the ideological reality of cinematic discourse.

As a project, *Cahiers* is articulated by and within two master discourses: historical materialism, whose 'scene' is history and economics; and psychoanalysis, the discourse on the 'other scene' of the subject, the unconscious. The two are mediated through an account of writing.

Indeed, the analysis of the status of the visible world seen in the images owes a fundamental debt to Marx's analysis of the mode of appearance of socially fabricated objects: commodity fetishism presents a mystified world. The visible world is not innocent or 'natural' but rather a world transformed by social processes. There is no 'transparent' or direct relation between visual phenomena and their causes. On the contrary, 'appearance' takes the form of a social hieroglyph: it has no unequivocal relation to the 'real'. Phenomena mask the social/economic laws, and thus the world that cinema pictures has an illusory appearance. Its illusion of natural intelligibility is the product of a social process called ideology. Since ideology consists of the system of representations that guarantee the maintenance of a mystified world, clarity of method is the means of disclosing what appearances hide. For *Cahiers* the signs of the world must be read in accordance with a hermeneutic scheme that has the power to intervene against natural visibility and explain it theoretically and historically (cf. the historical analysis of production of 'effects of the real'). Thus dialectical materialism is regarded as the basis of a scientific, social-epistemological intervention, and promises by its method to expose the complicity of the cinema institution with a capitalist order. The analysis of the social function of ideology for *Cahiers*, however, owes more to Althusser, one of the guiding *Cahiers* masters, than to Marx.

In the Althusserian account of 'Ideological State Apparatuses', one of the essential processes and functions of ideology is 'interpellation', that is, the construction and positioning of the subjective function within the field of discourse. Ideology works to produce subjects from individuals. It is in this way that the ideological apparatuses, including cinema, work to found and secure the deceptive status of the social appearance of things. The spectator is subjected to a thorough misunderstanding of his/her own relation to the filmic discourse and to its ideological effects. The Althusserian approach substitutes audience 'misrecognition', the Lacanian formulation, for the more conventional Marxist notion of 'mystification'. 'Subject misrecognition', the ensnarement of the subject by the order of images, is one of the principal ideological effects of the classical system of representation. By means of such inscription, the subject assumes his/her 'proper' place within the political/social/ideological order.

The cinematic 'impression of reality', in other words, is a social construction enforced by the ideological requirements of a certain social order. Exposition of the ideological effect of 'realism' on the filmic spectator takes the form, in the writing of Oudart, of an analysis of the history and structure of the subjective position itself, the position of the viewer, in the visual arts, beginning with medieval painting. Indeed, the cinematic 'impression of reality' is presented as the reinscription, and the historical transformation, of codes of Renaissance painting which are in turn constituted by a re-marking of a pre-existing medieval system. These Renaissance codes produce a pictorial space by implying a subject position outside the frame which structures the space, a structure that also masks the mechanism by which the spectator assumes his/her place. The new pictorial system of the Renaissance substitutes secular and contemporary figures for the medieval apostles, and refigures the relation of the scene to the viewer. Symbols of debt (the medieval servitude of God to man) are transformed without explanation into signs, making the spectator's position an effect of economic, as well as pictorial, signifiers. The spectator is addressed by the painting and located fictionally in a place that coincides, as it explicitly does in Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, with that of the King. The viewer is inscribed in a pictorial structure, as an absence regulated by a look. The effect of this structure is the viewer's positive 'assumption of existence' on the depicted figures. Vision of a real space is thus elided with the hallucinatory construction of a fictional space. The analysis of the archaeology of this impression of reality – to make us see it historically for what it is – is the initial step of *Cahiers'* deconstruction of the ideology that supports realism.

The impression of a continuous, homogeneous, 'realistic' fictional world is extended by syntactical forms – what *Cahiers* calls the 'scenography' of the classic film – to the effect of sequences or entire texts. A set of rules pertaining to screen direction, glances, off-screen space, scale, etc., which, when integrated with narrative requirements, institutes an (imaginary) spectator unity that sets up and guarantees a (codified) cinematic institution of the Real. The shot/reverse-shot figure within this style, and the 'system of the suture' that it entails, comes to exemplify the spectator's paradigmatic misunderstanding of his/her relation to the image. In its appropriation in the classic (subjective) cinema, as distinct from its use in Bresson, the 'system of the suture' is re-formed so that the viewer identifies with the image through an off-screen character. The spectator is assimilated by identification to the imaginary function and takes the depicted object as real. The installation of the subject in this place of fantasy is the means of inducing a profound (self-)misunderstanding of the viewer's relation to the image (of the subject's relation to the signifier), and thus of inscribing the viewer in the field of ideology. The terms of both Bazinian aesthetics and Metzian semiotics, Bonitzer maintains, contribute to the maintenance of the denotation, transparency, and illusory coherence that characterize this system of representation.

For Oudart, a system of representation is a thoroughly deceptive one: it asserts the reality of the image as the predicate of a subject whose vision serves as a stand-in for that of the spectator. The misunderstanding implied in this mode of vision consists in the fact that the spectator fantasizes him/herself both in the role of addressee and as director. The spectator's fantasy of constituting power, supported by the installation of an agency that regulates the look, is an inverted representation of the impossibility of supporting a continuous and complete subject. This agency is not the *auteur* of the earlier period, but a historically determined figure; as such it introduces the problematic of the *auteur* as a figure within the history of Representation. The system of suture provides the specific pleasure of an imaginary possession of space by reducing knowledge to vision (an 'impression of the real') and providing the subject apparent security by investing the power to see, though in a disguised form, in a Master of Representation.

For Comolli, in 'Technique and Ideology', the cinema apparatus, as such, repeats and extends the realism of perspectival painting. Cinema technology develops in response to an ideological demand to show life as it is – because of its inherent profitability, not, as some have argued, because it is essentially an idealist phenomenon or on account of its purely scientific use. Moreover, Comolli argues, the elaboration of film technique does not have a history independent of the uses to which it is put. The paradigmatic figure used to extend and support Comolli's case is, not incidentally, deep focus, a technique central to Bazin's aesthetic. In reinstating perspectival vision, the camera asserts an equation between vision and knowledge. But technological improvements, in conjunction with this figure, serve to renew and extend the guarantee of a realistic effect; they follow, in other words, economic and ideological determinations. The ideological project of cinema technology is the stabilization, and naturalization, of a false but realistic mode of sight.

If the second front to the critique of realism is through an analysis of syntactical forms of cinema construction, analysis of filmic 'writing' is approached as a study of signifying practices embedded within social space. In this way, the Marxist concept of cinematic 'writing' in the post–1968 period replaces the concept of 'writing' as a high level of quality that lay behind the *auteur* theory of the 1950s. Indeed, criticism considered as a scientific project of reading has as its object the analysis of 'writing', specifically of 'inscription' of the historical ways writing practices relate to ideological norms. Personal style, as the sign of the *auteur*, is displaced by the impersonal logic of the signifier. 'Writing' is treated as part of the history and transformation of the social ensemble.

Representation as writing is for *Cahiers* the means for bringing to bear both psychoanalysis and ideological studies on the cinema. Through this key notion, *Cahiers* intends to address the complexity of determinations by which ideology is present within texts and to scrutinize textuality as a process of production of meaning. Through appropriating Derrida's deconstructionist reading of the problem of voice, language, and writing in Rousseau, *Cahiers* can associate itself with a view that emphasizes writing as material trace. In so far as Bazin inherits the basic assumptions of Rousseau on the integral relation of presence to representation, *Cahiers* can justifiably oppose, on philosophical grounds, the idealist foundations of the transparency of the image and the *politique des auteurs*. Through the theory of writing as difference, *Cahiers* can examine the 'identity' of the visual image and its referent, and emphasize the materiality of the signifying process. Bazin's aesthetic of total cinema sought to eliminate such differences; the new *Cahiers* wishes to restore it as a first principle.

If Bazin's aesthetic followed Rousseau's in being a critique of representation as articulation ('montage'), Derrida's deconstruction of a theory of 'natural' and 'proper' meaning, and of mimesis, puts at *Cahiers'* disposal grounds for treating writing as work and as social transformation. Writing as re-inscription, as re-presentation, a process of erasure and supplementation of an already written text, links the text and the subject to a codified social scene.

Within the semantic 'space' of what Kristeva terms 'intertextuality' – the complex field and network of textual interconnections – is the transformation, the 'productivity' of the individual text. It is in this context that the productive, speaking subject, decentred from its traditional (transcendental) position by its relation to the unconscious, has a new relation to the signifier, one that takes on a specifically historical and cultural significance.

A *'politique'* of writing practices

In the 1969–72 period *Cahiers* reformulated Bazin's initial question, 'What is Cinema?', and provided a radically different answer: cinema is a commodity within a given set of social/economic relations that serves the dominant ideological ends. From this theoretical base, stated most programatically in 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism' (October 1971), *Cahiers* derived its principles of criticism of 'styles, forms, meanings, narrative traditions'.

As a critical programme designed to analyse the relations between films and dominant ideology by constructing a diagrammatic typology and then changing the ideology that shapes film, *Cahiers* adopts a kind of *politique*. The touchstone of the 'essential in the cinema and the chief subject of the review' is the identifying and promoting of those exemplary films – whether explicitly political or not – that attack ideology both formally and politically. It is a *politique* not of 'authors', but of writing practices.

The promotion of the possibility of politically progressive cinema, with specific modes of signification and reception, is linked to a critique of the ideological transparency of classic forms. The close critical attention to classic form and, just as rigorously, to the various misleading models of explicitly political practices (ones that merely seem to project a valid or compelling political practice) underlines *Cahiers'* recognition, but unreconciled acceptance, of the historically determined difficulty of transforming dominant writing practices. *Cahiers* undertakes, however, to point the way to the stylistic conditions of ideological deconstruction in the name of a valid militant practice, both by theoretical reflection and by critical scrutiny of a range of significant examples. The work on individual films, diverse as they are, is undertaken with a view to theoretical discrimination, and finally as part of a political project. It is in this framework that concentration on method – of conceptualizing filmic writing, and of determining the protocols of critical reading – emerges as the central perspective.

The central problematic which structures and governs *Cahiers'* critical method, the way it examines these writing practices, is accounting for the forms textuality assumes by reference to its 'determinations' of production. The answer, however, is not pursued through an analysis of the studio system or its alternatives, but through delineating the agencies and forces, whether personal ('authors') or 'social', that must be invoked to 'explain' the text. The *Cahiers* project is thus distinguished from structural analysis in its emphasis on the dynamics of production of meaning and on the centrality of 'determination' as such.

The two traditional categories for delineating the conditions (or 'causes') for the production of meaning have, in the essays collected here, complex internal relations. While on the one hand the critique of the 'author' or 'Master of Representation' as a historical figure and efficient cause is part of the general cultural project of deconstructing the subject as a form of determinant intentionality (the author/god is one of the illusory or transitional historical figures in the declension of social authority), this same figure, as the site of unconscious desire, is often invoked as a psychoanalytic, but ideologically mediated, category of textual determination. Obviously, it is not a question of reinstating the subject supposed by the *auteur* theory. The concept 'subject', however, works ambiguously in the account both as an effect of the signifier and as an agency of historical forces. In general, *Cahiers'* accounts of textual determination – of base on superstructure within a complex social formation – are formulated through Althusserian 'metonymic' causality. Within this framework, the impersonality of textual determinations often appears as the force not so much of economics, or politics, as of the privileged and fundamental category of contradictions or overdeterminations of the historical conjuncture.

The text on *Young Mr Lincoln* is the most programmatic and elaborated essay in method, one that follows the composite Althusserian-Lacanian model of 'determinations'. Its starting point is 'reading' the 'historicity of inscription', that is, examining the relation between the work and its social, historical, and ideological context. The essay proceeds from the premise that an artistic product is not linked to its socio-historical context according to a linear, reflective, or direct causality. To locate what sets the writing in place, to grasp the basic conditions of the dynamic production of meaning, and to make legible the film's 'complex, mediated and decentred relationship with the context', *Cahiers* reformulates 'cause' not as subject, but as structuring absences. The overdetermined structuring absences, the repressed scenes of sexuality and politics, are always displaced into and through networks of philosophical and political representations. The overall form of the text is the consequence of the way structuring absences initiate, through indirect (metonymic) ways, the arbitration of the political and ideological force outside the text with the internal imperatives of the writing. The specific ideological effect consists of a representation of Lincoln in a mythic mode that replaces history with morality.

The object of the *Cahiers* analysis of *Young Mr Lincoln* is a diagnosis of the stress that ideology puts on the textual system. An analysis of the distortions and vicissitudes of textual production 'caused' by the structuring absences is tantamount to an analysis of the effective 'grammar' of ideology as it is written in the text. It is in this sense that the object of this re-reading is the system of deception of classic texts and of the grammar of its ideological effects. It is an uncovering of the mechanisms of ideological production which stand behind the text's visible and manifest effects. The critical method then shows the effectivity of precisely what cannot be seen – the 'not said' that sets up the classic text: not authorial personality, but the secret mechanism of ideological production. The critical discourses of overdetermination – Marx and Freud – provide the basis for an 'active reading' whose specific power is showing the effectiveness of the lacks that set up the discourse. In this way the critical discourse is not confined to mirroring or repeating what the film text says about itself.

In general, *Cahiers'* 'critique' of cinematic writing practices amounts to clarifying and elaborating in specific detail the fundamental requirement that texts designate the historical conditions that govern the process of inscription. The initial typology is replaced by a problematic: specifying the way a text locates itself and declares its composition as a mode of writing in the context of the historical conjuncture in which it appears. The demand for the text's accounting for itself – for indicating the conditions of the text's own production and reception – gives rise to *Cahiers'* effort to analyse, across a range of styles, the complex strategies of avoidance, acknowledgment, deception or misunderstanding of the text's social position and force. The reciprocal articulation of the two paradigmatic scenes – the sexual and political – onto each other, within a determinate social setting, emerges as *Cahiers'* fundamental critical/theoretical model of the grammar of textual economy. It is with this general problematic then – of reindicating the historical and social context and/or the personal desire of the maker as the condition of meaning production of the text, a project aimed at deconstructing the guarantees of received practice and effecting the passage from the old to the new social/filmic order – that *Cahiers* opens its enquiry into the *politiques* of filmic writing.

In this context, *Cahiers* takes up and evaluates three general models of actual filmic practice: the classic, the militant, and the modernist. Through such critical work, *Cahiers* defines the conditions and limits on writing to effect a new route to the 'real'. Between the classic model and the militant is the third type, the modern ('deficient discourse'), which negotiates, unsuccessfully, the historical impasse which determines its form.

The analysis of the classic American cinema (Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln*, Sternberg's *Morocco* – both by an editorial collective, Cukor's *Sylvia Scarlett*, and Griffith's *Intolerance*) undertook to examine conceptually the relation of the text to dominant ideological form. The text on *Morocco* (*Cahiers* 225, November-December 1970) engages the mythology of the woman in the American cinema and its place within a system of production; the text on *Sylvia Scarlett* (*Cahiers* 238–9, May-June 1972), outlines the structural limits on the unity of the classic form.

Taken together, these essays undertake to demonstrate a number of interlocked and characteristic effects: transparency of image to referent, naturalization of the truth of the protagonist – whether man or woman – by means of mythologization of narrative, whose currency is closely allied to the general system of production and social power, and the construction of spectator misunderstanding about the terms of the functioning of the film. Specifically, *Cahiers* suggests that classic writing forecloses the question of the work's historical conjuncture, its inscription in history, and its ideological effects, by covering and masking the social determinations by the erotic. The critical discourse supplies answers to those questions of determination the classic film refuses to ask, and seeks to demonstrate the ends of this writing practice – mastering and social maintenance – by an analysis of the functioning of ideology as a naturalization of social relations. The theory of the classic text is not inscribed within the work as such, but must be reconstituted by an independent critical practice of writing, guided by historical materialism.

The project of the second category, 'militant cinema', whose cause *Cahiers* takes up, calls into question and seeks to transform the dominant ideological ensemble of classical realism and to bring into existence works of social/aesthetic transformation. *Cahiers'* central requirement for the 'militant cinema' is that it rigorously and clearly place itself within the context of production and reception and that it provide an account of its own process of meaning. The model of the determinations of the *écriture* of militant cinema is, like the classic cinema, a product of the dialectical relation between the two paradigmatic scenes. The militant film, however, refers to the real social and economic contradictions outside the film, as pre-texts to which it refers, and seeks to place itself with reference to its historical conditions by re-marking the formative and productive processes that constitute the text. In other words, such an account cannot simply be a self-reflexive presentation of the processes of the apparatus of film-making or avant-gardist transgression. Rather, the guarantee of the validity of a serious political writing practice is the account the film gives of its own place and effect within a given historical conjuncture. Indeed the strongest criticism is directed against those films that *seem* to offer a political analysis. The militant cinema of 're-presentation' at the same time criticizes existing bourgeois systems of representation and questions its own expository processes, and locates itself in a concrete historical context.

The collective text on Renoir's (militant) *La Vie est à nous* (*Cahiers* 218, March 1970) is the first major 'reading' of the newly reconstituted *Cahiers*. To account for the specificity and method of the construction of the film, *Cahiers* argues the need to set the work in the social/historical context of the Popular Front in France in 1936. Thus it begins with a critique of the reception of the film and indicates the ideological significance of what popular criticism has left aside. Through a analysis of the dialectical relation between the documentary and fictional material, namely the way each mode questions the status of the images of the other, *Cahiers* shows how the film reflects on its own production and reception. Moreover, by inscribing within the fiction a character representative of a certain class position, the film traces the path of conviction and commitment of a typical middle-class viewer and negotiates the spectator's relation to the Communist cause. The film clearly comprehends, in other words, the question of the audience, and accounts for its mode of address by its own dialectical construction. In this way, the ending avoids the 'imaginary satisfaction of the real demand'.

In contrast, the essays on films by Jancsó (*Cahiers* 219, April 1970), Costa-Gavras (*L'Aveu:* 224, October 1970) and Kozintsev and Trauberg (*The New Babylon:* 230, July 1971, and 232, October 1971) constitute *Cahiers'* critique of the false models of the militant film. Jancsó's film, linked to the aesthetic of the modern and the formal, with allusions to real political referents, is perhaps the most ambiguous of its kind. Narboni and Comolli treat Jancsó's writing as a example of static structuralism, the play of certain formal parameters that display the mechanisms of modern productive activity but fail to account for the text's actual determinations. That is, Jancsó separates the effect of Stalinism (the how) from the cause, History (the why). For Oudart, the central issue is the relation of the film to the 'real', and the perception of the film as an aesthetic object, as a hypothesized 'real' constructed in relation to a contemporary (political) referent.

The insistence in Jancsó's writing on the re-fictionalization of the film, and the accompanying pleasure, and not the filmed object, suggests the terms of a critical and inadequate understanding of the historically overdetermined project of abstraction. Jancsó's inability to undertake an analysis of the social contradictions that lead to this aestheticizing of the filmic object itself defines the historical impasse of a certain form of contemporary political cinema. The other more evident danger is the positive reception of a popular political work, like *L'Aveu*, which redoubles, by its transparency and accessibility of technique and theme, the strength of the dominant ideology.

The *Cahiers* analysis, however, of an explicitly political film, Kozintsev and Trauberg's *The New Babylon* (1929), a film on the Paris Commune, demonstrates the centrality of the dialectics of formal design for a political work. The signifying economy of the text is composed by a fictional procedure – presentation of the paradigmatic antagonism, bourgeoisie (artificial)/proletariat (real) – that has the effect of making this conflict the film's *referent*, and thus instituting a certain sense of the 'real'. For *Cahiers*, the principal problem of the film's construction is that this two-term relation is a fixed relation and is not conceived dynamically, or productively. Consequently, the film has not thought through in sufficient depth the theatrical metaphors – the 'scene' of history – in Marx's *Civil War in France*. The Commune is presented in an edifying mode as the mythic origin of the Revolution, and not as a historical episode in the class struggle. In the text's suppression of history for myth, the film is similar to Hollywood writing. The film thus institutes an ideological effect and fails as a political or historical analysis.

Materialist writing, *Cahiers* affirms again, does not consist of the simple redoubling of scenes, or the exhibition of the means of production, but rather calls for the reindication, by an analysis of its origin and history, of the formative process of every representative effect. Materialist writing, by its critique of fantasy in spectator position, would open a way to defining the 'real' by other than specular means. An analysis of the actual context of scenographic effects would open and disclose the other scene(s) of history, politics and economics as textual determinations and affirm the materiality of signifying practice in film forms. Straub's *Othon* (cf. 'Vicarious Power', *Cahiers* 224, October 1970), for example, in part because of the way it works against the structure and transparency of the image, becomes political. As in Eisenstein's practice, Straub's reworking of the image/narrative relation discloses what other forms of *écriture* tend to efface, the importance of work on the signifier as political action and ideological deconstruction. Such a practice contests simple specular reflection and fantasy, and reworks spectator positioning.

The 'contemporary cinema', the third general category, is a style or mode that inherits the classic Hollywood tradition, and stands in a critical relation to it. As such, it both summarizes and renegotiates the problems of the relation of writing to ideology. Specifically, it raises the question of the status of the filmic image – both fictional and real in a sense, its 'impression of reality' – in relation to the analysis of the contradictions of the social formation. The 'deficient discourse' of the modernist cinema – principally Bresson (*Cahiers* 232, October 1971) and Visconti (*Cahiers* 234–5, December 1971 – February 1972) – is caught within and has a problematic relation to the norms of the classical model.

As presented in Oudart's 'Word Play, Master Play' (*Cahiers* 223, August-September 1970), Buñuel's *Tristana*, for example, is a film whose solution to the problem of disclosing its determinations is fundamentally equivocal. It is, moreover, symptomatic of the difficulty of the modern film's inability to formulate a political discourse. In *Tristana*, the level of the fiction is organized like *Morocco*, according to the *Cahiers* paradigm – the social position of characters is linked to the erotic configuration – but, unlike the classic fiction, not in an overdetermined way. The fiction is composed of the major erotic obsessions, the clichés, of the culture, condensed in the formula 'a castrated man desires a fetishized woman'. But Buñuel's writing reinscribes these narrative clichés in a mode of disclosure. They are presented as conscious knowledge. That is, Buñuel signifies fetishism as such, reinscribes it, in a perverse mode, and thus designates the text's historical place in relation to these obsessions. The film in other words deconstructs this everyday knowledge of the cliché, by spelling it out. However, it leaves the cliché intact. The film adds nothing new as to the structural causality that governs the precise and exhaustive arrangement of formal elements – the cliché is embedded in an ideology maintained by contemporary social structures; the text acknowledges that it deconstructs without destroying. Within the contemporary historical situation, Oudart asserts, aesthetic practice is limited to this subversive form of play. Authorship as 'mastery' is limited to the conscious rehearsal and criticism of bourgeois clichés. Modernism has reached an impasse.

The 'deficient discourse' explicitly compares its own modern forms of *écriture* with the paradigmatic 'classic forms'. The contemporary cinema, however, often takes as its starting-point the outsideness or disjuncture of its central figure to the world, but does so via a certain strategy in the placement of the spectator. In the Bressonian model, the central figure's vision institutes the fictional world, while establishing at the same time an impossible relation between the two terms – self and world.

The scenography is determined by the reinscription of the ideological effects of the spectator's opposition to his world. However, it is so constructed as to block the spectator from seeing that the opposition is a consequence of real social contradictions. The real situation is eclipsed. The spectator, who assumes the role of the central character, thus sees the film as an effect of his or her own fantasy of opposition (cf. 'Work, Reading, Pleasure', *Cahiers* 222, July 1970), ruling out the possibility of analysis of the text's overdeterminations.

Oudart and Daney's essay 'The Name of the Author' (*Cahiers* 234–5, December 1971 – February 1972), on Visconti's *Death in Venice*, is certainly *Cahiers'* most comprehensive restatement of the modernist problematic. The film is at the same time the closure and transformation of the classical Hollywood form, and because its central figure institutes a critical vision of the social milieu, it stands squarely in the tradition of the contemporary European cinema. The article brings together a set of theoretical issues developed around the 'impression of the real', with an analysis of textual economy, and integrates them within the perspective of the role and representation of the author within the text.

In the post-war European cinema which Visconti repeats and closes, the disjuncture between the character's critical vision and the social milieu is the object of the vision and representation of the author. The modern European film transforms Hollywood's 'transparency' by introducing into the *mise en scène* the signature of the author. The inscription of the authorial signature in this instance is a historical phenomenon: that is, the renewal of the cinematic 'impression of the real' is linked (cf. 'Notes for a Theory of Representation' *Cahiers* 229, May-June 1971, and 230, July 1971) to a history of the transformation of authority.

The relation of 'author' to central character is erotically (narcissistically) overdetermined and works to structure a specific scenic effect: the author's 'scene' is that of the relation character/milieu. The object of his vision is the decomposition of the bourgeois class – corruption by Nazism – regarded as a historical spectacle. The cause of this degeneration, however, is assigned to a sexual disorder in that world, and is not pictured as the result of an economic or historical determination. In this way, the political/historical determinations are foreclosed by the sexual ones.

This central contradiction, the substitution of sexuality for politics, is condensed around the figuration of sexuality itself. The fiction consists of the *mise en scène* of a desire structured by a series of displacements of the Master/Servant relation: the shooting both exhibits and masks an erotic relation between 'author' and actor. Metaphorization of sexuality and its placement as the secret of class, *Cahiers* argues, is the result of Visconti's effort to censor his own homosexuality. The classic narrative economy of the suture, of viewer/viewed, collapses. The action of the shooting becomes the fiction itself. Shooting fetishizes what the classic cinema foreclosed – the materiality of the camera's placement and the agency of inscription. The supplement of signifiers, the 'Name of the Author' (director plus camera), takes the place of the camera alone in the articulation of classical fiction. The effect is a restructuring of the conventional distinction between the real and the fictive. The instability of the institution of the 'real', produced by an equivocation as to reference, persists. The fetishization of the writer (the author of a fiction and the director of the shooting) thus safeguards the status of the classical image which is threatened with collapse, and confers on its transformation the ideological status of the 'real'. This 'Name' thus serves as the support of the fantasy of the spectator in occupying the author's place (cf. 'Work, Reading, Pleasure') in a hallucinatory mode. It is the sign of a transformation of a mode of discourse and of the need and means for a renewed assertion of authority. The supplement to the images serves to keep hidden what is effective throughout the film: the continuous repression of the proletariat as the means and body of social production.

In general terms, the transformation from 'classical' to 'modern' *écriture* is characterized in these critical writings as a transformation of the status of the image: from the 'real' to the 'apparent'. The contemporary cinema *seems* to denounce the image. In place of the 'transparency' of the image and its integration with social institutions are the tracings of production. In fact, however, the ideology success of the contemporary cinema with its audience is related to the confusion between image and referent. Through a character who often does not understand the world, the *écriture* designates and institutes a 'real' other than the one which actually dictates the fiction. The ideological effect produced by this conflation permits the spectator the illusion of uncovering a truth. But in fact this is a strategy of masking the referent's real social determinations. Misunderstanding again hides the relation of the signifier to the subject. The impasse in such contemporary ('deficient') films, which link productive effects either to the designation of representation as sham, or to the images' artistic value as signature, is that such effects simply redouble the norms of the classical discourse. Such a writing practice simply reinscribes the same ideological effects without clarification or disclosure.

In 'Cinema, Ideology, Politics' (*Cahiers* 232, October 1971), *Cahiers* restates its principal positions: that the aim of the review is to struggle against bourgeois ideology through the modification of the conditions and assumptions of film viewing and allied critical discourses; that its strategy is the deconstruction of the dominant representational system of 'realism'; that ideological criticism extends to an analysis of formal features, which in so far as they convey a certain 'illusion of reality' have political effects 'of the second power'; and (I would add) that within society this illusion has a history connected to increasingly elaborate strategies of subject misrecognition; that the contemporary tendency of serious films to foreground their own aesthetic dimension at the expense of a clear definition of their relation to their referent, and to the social milieu in which they appear, is a distinct symptom of the contemporary social/ideological impasse; and, finally, that the review is committed to the promotion of films which embody and encourage the elaboration of materialist film theory and practice. A materialist practice of writing would, by reindicating the social conditions of its own productive effects, restructure the fantasy of an assured spectator centrality required by the dominant social order.

In general, the *Cahiers* discourse – in the domains of the subject, signifier, ideology, narrative, the cinematic figure, and history – constitutes the terms of a critique of classical representation and its attendant 'impression of reality'.

Film theory/criticism, as these essays will show, is and must be ordered by a *politique*. Even as a style of writing, *Cahiers* must act in a political arena where good and 'proper' sense is regarded as readily accommodated by the dominant ideological venture. Its refusal of a degree-zero prose style opposes and resists certain popular critical discourses on cinema and seems part of its critique of the transparency of ideology. The danger of *Cahiers'* mode of work is that its own place in the ideological network, and its own powers of analysis, will be circumscribed by strategies of recuperation or confinement. History provides the logic of *Cahiers'* recognition of limits on the effective power of its dialectical and oppositional discourse within its received setting. Critical method then provides the structure and ground of *Cahiers'* intervention, its refusal to be accommodated, and its guarantee of political clarity.

1 Jean Narboni, Sylvie Pierre, Jacques Rivette: 'Montage'[1]

('Montage', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 210, March 1969)

Circumstances: Aix-en Provence, more specifically the Centre Dramatique du Sud-Est where, at the invitation of Antoine Bourseiller, four of us found ourselves along with fifteen films on 7, 8 and 9 February. In the little time available between screenings, discussions on these films, loosely hinging on the notion of montage, took place between the audience and us. This text is derived from a consideration of those discussions. The form of the text: neither debate nor round-table discussion, collection of articles or treatise by several voices, but a 'montage' of critical texts. Reading the text: 1. Non-linear, without beginning or end, attempting to open a reading space where the blanks and deficiencies, omissions or redundancies, hopefully leave the reader free to interject his own opinions or his reservations. 2. Not circumscribed, since a network of notes challenges it, opens it out, defines it more precisely. The unsigned notes are by the person to whose contribution they relate. 3. Not concluded. Provisional: between open doors and yawning questions, an arena of probing draughts. (Further articles will attempt to offer remedies.)

Jacques Rivette: What was the principle of the '*journées*' at Aix? To take the notion of montage as a connecting thread, a notion that today becomes central to the consideration of other matters than cinema (cf. the fact, for instance, that Sollers or Faye can cite Eisenstein on an equal footing with leading literary theorists and practitioners); and on this basis to view or re-view a certain number of films, regrouping, arranging, 'superimposing' them, and from this superimposition (as with patterns) to try to discover the common grounds and the differences.

In practice, therefore, alongside a characteristic example – Eisenstein's *The General Line;* and it was only for practical reasons that Griffith's *Intolerance* could not be screened – a number of trail-blazing films from the last ten years were brought together: *About Something Else* (Chytilova), *Made in USA* (Godard), *Méditerranée* (Pollet), *Machorka-Muff, Not*

Reconciled and *The Bridegroom, The Comedienne and the Pimp* (Straub), *Marie pour mémoire* (Garrel), *The Hour of the Furnaces* (Solanas); facing these, following the hypothesis whereby the resurgence of montage over the last ten years began with the emergence of direct methods, two key stages in 'direct cinema': *Shadows* (Cassavetes) and *Pour la suite du monde* (Perrault), Rouch being omitted only through unavoidable circumstances, and finally, to put our thesis to the test, if indeed there was such a thing as a thesis, the antithesis of two supreme achievements of the so-called 'classical' cinema: Mizoguchi (*The Empress Yang Kwei Fei*) and Dreyer (*Gertrud*) – though it might equally well have been Renoir, Ford or Rossellini.

The ambition behind this grouping was in effect to attempt, in a rather hazardous (indeed aleatory) manner, a 'montage of films': to interrelate, by means of these examples, different approaches to methods of structuring film, and to see what these connections and continuities might produce.

Sylvie Pierre: Perhaps we started out from a slight misunderstanding in that we were trying to talk simultaneously about the problems of cinematographic montage, and about the problems posed for the cinema by a more abstract idea, 'the idea of montage', which in fact derives from a sort of metaphorical extension of cinematographic montage within non-cinematographic areas.[2] So on the one hand we were examining montage as a technique of juxtaposing shots, which quite naturally led us to the consideration of films representing extreme cases of montage: whether 'over'-edited (Eisenstein, Pollet) or 'under'-edited (Dreyer, Mizoguchi).[3] Whereas montage as a metaphorical term, on the other hand – in other words collage, broadly speaking – led us into quite another area of speculation, for instance with *Made in USA*.

Rivette: I don't think there was any misunderstanding in so far as the choice of films was concerned: let's say that originally we stated or implied a sort of methodological *a priori*, distinguishing between all films having in common that they went through the editola stage as a *creative* stage, and the rest; or to put it another way, between directors who 'make' the film essentially during shooting (and in the pre-planning: for example Ford and Renoir), and those for whom this work of writing or *strategy* and the actual shooting is merely the accumulation of material (a working stock) which is subsequently subjected to scrutiny anew, and only acquires its order and meaning in the editing room (Rouch and Perrault as well as Godard and Eisenstein): two families which we weren't comparing in quality but opposing – provisionally at least – in an attempt to understand more clearly.

Jean Narboni: To my mind another misunderstanding might have arisen from the confusion which still persists between montage as the *idea of montage* and montage as *effect* (or effects, most often understood pejoratively). When we presented these films, the intention wasn't to focus them on the secondary sense alone – montage as king, sovereign organizing principle of the film, manipulation in control – but more generally on the primary meaning: montage (even where it doesn't manifest itself in obvious 'effects') as essential productive work. Objection could be made that in this sense any film, in so far as it comprises a certain number of shots placed end to end and stuck one to another, is dependent on montage, and that therefore any film would qualify (or indeed any shot, since Eisenstein demonstrated so forcibly that montage could not be absent even within a shot). This was why I used the words work, productive, creative montage, montage texture, to make a clear distinction between the films that are dependent on montage, and those in which the business of arranging shots, of interrupting them at this point or that, is merely the continuation, the completion – a nuance or improvement or two apart – of a preconceived purpose, and contents itself with following an already determined meaning instead of making a new one emerge. Exemplary in respect to the first category, for instance, are two films as different as *About Something Else* and *Pour la suite du monde* where, without being manifest through 'exterior signs', the montage plays an active role as mainspring, motor, propellant, mobile suspension between two shots, but also – especially – between the larger units of the discourse.[4]

With regard to the famous montage 'effects', we ought to reconsider this term and its usage very carefully and precisely in order to avoid perpetuating the errors and vague notions still evoked by any 'edited' film. If by 'montage effects' we mean manufactured devices, extraneous ornamentation, rhetorical tricks, then the term should be applied strictly to films which use them as such, which reduce to pure formula and cliché what constituted the foundation stone and not just the trimmings of the great Soviet silents (Eisenstein, Vertov, Dovzhenko), who are unquestionably beyond reproach in this matter in that they considered montage as a dynamic creative process. By including all films where montage plays a primordial role in the same debatable category, one risks falling into the same error which led to the long-held view that a poetic discourse was merely a prose discourse with something extra – the poetic flavour or effect, in fact. But if one examines a film like *Gertrud*, apparently remote from the preoccupations of montage, one realizes that montage is very much present, though as a screening effect, a mask, and that it can intervene in a film as a creative process equally well through its effacement as through its attested credentials (a process which has nothing to do with the 'transparent montage' of the American cinema, for example). Jean-Luc Godard's comparison of montage to a heartbeat may be profitably recalled to pursue the analogy by saying that, just as the cardiac function alternates diastole and systole, silences – large and small – and sounds, so montage is as effective in its pervasions as in its voids, in its absences as in its traces.

Rivette: This is why it was essential to see Chytilova's film again right away: a film in which the role played by montage-manipulation is quite obvious, where one sees quite clearly how both detail (plastic and dynamic: the 'trait') and the effect of each splice have been systematically rethought on the editola; but above all a film where the work of montage at this primary level (the level of micro-structures) has manifest repercussions on the 'thought' of the film as a whole (what musicians call 'the grand form') and vice versa: each incessantly gearing itself on the other. So the film functions as the irregular alternation, the 'matching' of two autonomous films, or of two hypergeneric sequences, each one being governed at every level by its own formal laws, not only in so far as methods of '*mise en scène*', camera attitudes, and directing the actors are concerned, but in its own internal montage.

This said, what makes *About Something Else* particularly interesting is to see how this principle in fact works not purely and simply as the alternation of two parallel actions, as merely the sum of the two, but as a *multiplication* of each 'level' by the other: and this without any interference or reference from one to the other, but on the contrary through the independence that is affirmed at every moment, re-established, reconstituted, re-created by each of them; it is through an incessant process of rejection, much more than through 'connections', that the micro-formal web organizes itself: the act whereby the montage effectively becomes a productive process is sustained here by a rigorous system of deception.[5]

At the same time, the interlacing of the plots is not so much what arouses the interest (the participation) as what blocks it, frustrates it (deprives it of its dividend by threatening its capital) by its displacement of the referent – of the relation: of 'the real' – to their manipulation. Hence the full scope that subsequently arises for space-time distortions, without any possibility of verification from the narrative: one can equally well feel that Chytilova makes too much of these or too little. A fictitious (fictional) space-time, strictly non-psychological (nothing to do with the imaginary according to Robbe-Grillet), the continuum of the film is *opening*, like space (on the stage) and time (on magnetic tape) for Merce Cunningham, but which is not pre-existent here, which therefore doesn't have to be filled, which is nothing other than a void, and like the imprint of a fossil, is left gaping by the decay of the old narrative and representational space-time.

Pierre: At the outset, at any rate, we envisaged the films within three characteristic types of situation with regard to montage.

1. Films dependent, as Jean Narboni was saying, on 'montage texture': films based on montage as the instrument of a dialectic and of a discourse (Eisenstein, Solanas).
2. Films which do not seem to establish themselves in relation to montage as creative work, in which montage is not present as a dominant effect, but in which, as we have seen, the apparent absence of montage at the creative stage may conceal various montage manoeuvres: whether the employment, to maximum effect, of a small number of liaisons

between lengthy shots, or whether the displacement of the work of montage by means of other hinges in the cinematic combinative than those of montage properly speaking (through the *découpage* – e.g. Straub – and through articulation within the shot itself – e.g. Mizoguchi or Renoir).

3. Films based, as in 1, on a creative work of montage, but which use it less for its power to carry meanings than, on the contrary, for its power to block them. The montage serving, in other words, a preoccupation with obscuring or even banishing the meaning (Pollet).

In this last category, the montage principles of underground or 'undergroundish' cinema should of course be considered. Here a veritable passion for montage seems to derive less from a concern (as with Pollet) to give the film a poetic structure, than from a terrorist desire for atomizing, for exploding the very notion of an 'oeuvre'. Montage, rapid by preference, thus being used as a means (among others) to a 'systematic derangement' of the discourse.[6,7]

Rivette: Perhaps we should now abandon this area of *a priori* classifications for the moment, and make the leap[8] into trying to see what these classifications 'mean', what they correspond to in the activity of the films themselves. One very soon realizes, in fact, that as soon as one wants to make a rather closer analysis of the 'work' of one of these films (work of the film-maker on the film, operation of the film on the 'reader'), one has to begin by carefully examining the categories to which it is usually subordinated.

In the case of *Made in USA*, for instance, the now generally accepted notion of 'collage' has first to be challenged: not to deny it, but in order to try to understand better how the collage worked in this case and what particular form of collage Godard's method derived from. For what distinguishes his films from those of Chytilova, Eisenstein or Pollet, is that with him one feels there was (or used to be) an earlier state of the film, an inference the others do not permit. In *Made in USA* Godard leaves the impression of an earlier film, rejected, contested, defaced, torn to shreds: destroyed as such, but still 'subjacent'. The film only functions in relation to simultaneous referents, more or less tacit but proliferating, encroaching on each other so that they themselves ravel up and weave the entire filmic texture, since ultimately one can feel that there is nothing, no phrase, shot or movement, that is not a more or less 'pure' citation or referent: the important thing being, during the course of the film, not to try to identify all these referents, which would be both impossible and pointless, but to realize (to see within the perspective of the idea) that *everything* is referential, though the referents are set with traps and dissembled, deconsecrated, by an operation that is literally 'terrorist'.

The initial impulse of the film, what one can probably think of as the point of departure for Godard's activity, is in fact a montage idea: what happens if one 'edits together, if one combines some lousy *série noire* novel with the Ben Barka affair: not of course the 'reality' of the affair, which I don't know, which escapes me, but as I might have read about it in the papers, as I might reconstruct it, *imagine* it, from a collage of newspaper cuttings; hence, a montage of two 'texts' (but also, shredding of the pre-texts). A reading of the film proper, which offers itself as 'completed', must in a sense retrace this movement by de-montage and, through a decipherment of both the tattered remains of the thriller plot and the echoes of political co-ordinates (a task itself embroiled, obstructed, frankly presented as unfeasible), finally attain – later, and likely after re-viewing – a level where the film becomes immediately legible as it unfolds on the screen.

Almost all of Godard's films function, as a matter of fact, through the embroilment of sub-texts: in *Le Mépris*, for instance, *The Odyssey*, Fritz Lang, Moravia's novel, Cinecittà . . . In *Méditerranée*, on the other hand, Pollet *makes use of* the fascination exerted by a more or less comparable ideological background: bullfighting, ruined Greek temples, Egyptian statues, the sea: but he wants to use each of these elements as a work closed in on itself,loaded with the full charge of its potential meaning,[9] whereas with Godard now, most of the time, he baulks at any clear and distinct expression of the 'word'; and increasingly, moreover, the reference for each citation is, if not false, at least *falsified*: whereas in the early films quotations still played their traditional role, presented openly with an indication of the source and its traditional connotations, nowadays the fragmentation of his referents constitutes the texture and the very matter of the film, and in a certain sense, its *end*.

Pierre: It may be no accident that there are so many torn posters in *Made in USA*: defacements which epitomize the complementary action of the collage. For in order for collage to exist, each element must first have been torn from its context, and this preliminary operation involves a violence at least equal to that subsequently involved in the shock of producing the new combination. With Godard, what is all the more violent about this excision of the elements is their loss of identity (the fact that one cannot recognize the quotations, but also that everything becomes quotation, even what isn't) in favour of a sort of general super-identity: an overall hyper-Godardization.

In Pollet's case, the relationship of the parts to the whole is of the same order. There is indeed *loss* of identity (of the proper name) among the parts in favour of the whole (in other words, the idea of Mediterranean as wholly mythical), but in point of fact, inasmuch as it refers back to such a prestigious whole, each element becomes fascinating again for its own sake, acquiring more weight than it has itself. It is then up to the commentary to take over the work of laceration, both of the parts (by disrupting the fascination exerted by each image) and of the whole (the commentary's task of demystification with respect to the Mediterranean myth). This commentary method obviously cannot result in a pulverization of the elements as radical as Godard's. Pollet's commentary-images montage remains edifying, in the sense that the film aims to be a poem, an edifice.

arboni: Méditerranée is an exemplary case. Among the films we selected, in fact, it established precisely the question around which our choice was organized, since it is an interrogation of montage, a question endlessly put and put again to montage: when, how, why pass from one thing to another? A sentence in Sollers' commentary defines and underlines this interrogation: 'And if at the same time somewhere in some unimaginable somewhere someone calmly began to replace you?' (to examine in their turn the 'somewhere', the 'unimaginable', the 'calmly', could lead us too far, though still to the point of the film and the question it asks of montage). Similarly, 'how to end?' 'how to begin?', all those apparently self-evident questions that are never asked in films (but are beginning to be: cf. for instance, *Le Gai savoir* or *Marie pour mémoire*) are also omnipresent throughout the film, and not merely at the beginning and end. It is the course of the film that poses them.[10] For those who see in *Méditerranée* only a series of shots stirred up more or less felicitously, accompanied by a 'literary' commentary by Philippe Sollers, let us recall that similar preoccupations are the subject of a novel, *Drame* by Philippe Sollers in fact, concerning which Roland Barthes writes: 'The narration is in fact merely the free figure in this question: *what is a story*? At what level of myself, of the world, shall I decide *that something is happening to me*? The earliest poets, the authors of those very old epic ballads preceding *The Iliad*, exorcized the terrifying arbitrariness of narrative (why begin here rather than there) by a preamble whose ritual meaning was this: the story is infinite, it began long ago (did it ever begin?): I take it up *at this point*, where I start.'

How does the montage work in *Méditerranée*, what is its role, its function, its mechanism? Precisely, it seems to me, in the area of effacing the meanings and connotations with which the content of the shot is charged even before the film starts. Selecting a limited number of *shots revolving around* the Mediterranean, Pollet edits and organizes them, introducing and rearranging them in a process designed gradually to make them equivalent in value, to equalize them in their symbolic importance. In my opinion it isn't true to say that there is no text pre-existing *Méditerranée*, that the film establishes a first text. The graphic inscription [*écriture*] of the film is of course creative, but *against* and in relation to another text, which is extra-cinematographic – yes – but cultural and ideological. The film acquires meaning (of being, in fact, *Méditerranée* and nothing else) only by effacing all previous meanings. It is articulated around two kinds of shot, some of them very *marked*, heavily charged with cultural symbolisms and connotations (pyramid, temple, or places of modern myth such as factory and hospital), others more neutral; and their intermixture, their distribution and redistribution, their alternation and recurrence, initiate – purely through the impetus of the film's course, its movement, through the analogy of situation that comes into play (all these shots are *of* the film) – a process of levelling, of equalization. The antithetical coupling of ancient and modern, marked and unmarked, gives way to a locus where unequal valuations, hierarchical degrees and temporal differences no longer hold sway. This seems to me to be the reason why Pollet has tried to turn each of his shots into the equivalent of a word, or at least – since such a thing is impossible – the nearest thing to a word. We know, in fact, as Christian Metz has clearly demonstrated in five points, that a film shot, no matter how parsimonious its information, can be the equivalent only of at least a sentence, never of a word: 1. Shots are infinite, the words in a language finite in number; 2. Shots are inventions by the film-maker, words pre-exist in a dictionary; 3. The shot yields an indefinite amount of information; 4. The shot is an actualized unit of the discourse; the word, a unit in the dictionary, is purely virtual: an image of a bench signifying in effect 'here is a bench' and not simply 'bench'; 5. A shot assumes its meaning only to a small degree through paradigmatic opposition to the other shots that might have appeared at the same point in the chain (since these are indefinite in number), whereas a word always forms part of one or several more or less organized semantic fields. Pollet, one realizes, however, has intuitively tried to reduce these distinctions by taking all these points into account: 1. he has limited the number of his shots, and played on their recurrence rather than their variety; 2. he has 'invented' or 'staged' as little as possible in them; 3. in attempting to reduce them each time to a single unit of content, he made a maximum reduction in the information they can give; 5. he has tried to establish a rich paradigmatic of the film, first by playing on the title, *Méditerranée*, as a 'reserve' furnishing a limited number of shots, so that each of them is in effect buoyed by the ensemble of other shots that the theme of *Méditerranée* might have supplied (even if we do not represent them, we think them as the *other, all-embracing* and *lacking* from each shot); but also through the ordering of the shots themselves, whose periodical recurrence (even when filmed from a different angle) denotes each time that they have been chosen – levied – from a relatively restricted field; 4. and finally, by effecting a perversion (the commentary is crucially important here) of the actualization of the images and of their quality of assertiveness, so that the 'here is a bench', for example, apprehended in a text (imaged and voiced) where distinctions between dream/sleep, imaginary/real and so forth all subside, is eventually called into question in its turn. The pivot, the axis constituted by the commentary, is the basic element around which the vacillation in the spectacle takes place, the inversion of spectator/performer, seer/seen ('And suppose one were being watched?', 'A spectacle, however, which one knows very well will not come from without'). We are a long way here from the accusations of 'poeticism' the film incurred.

Pierre: This reflection of Pollet's on montage, which has been contrasted with Eisenstein's cinema of montage, in fact establishes itself with Eisenstein on the horizon, with a reflection on montage according to Eisenstein; with the idea that montage is the only way to create non-reactionary cinema as opposed to the cinema of beguilement, of representation. But here we must be extremely careful and very precise in the terms used, for as soon as political implications come into it one is all too inclined to be taken in by vague metaphors. Undoubtedly one can consider that a cinema which conceals its shot-to-shot liaisons from you (the 'unobtrusive montage' discussed earlier), or which gives preference to long takes (the 'attenuated montage' also discussed), manoeuvres the spectator in a way one might describe as reactionary because what is then involved is either illusionism (concealment of cinematographic discontinuity) or beguilement by means of the shot. In each case it is the impossibility of escaping what *is* on the screen. So, where one can by contrast qualify Eisensteinian montage as 'progressist' is, paradoxically, in its most dictatorial aspect: the passages from one shot to another deprive the spectator of any possibility of escaping from thought, from the need to maintain a reflective distance in relation to the shot. Hence there is no way one can give oneself up to the representation. And it is this impossibility that Pollet took up in his turn; through rejecting the dictatorship by discourse and meaning.

Narboni: Eisenstein was of course trying to convey a meaning by and in his films which wasn't simply the meaning of the film as meaning, as self-designation, but the meaning of Communism itself. What places him incomparably higher than the other propagandist film-makers is that he himself set out in quest of this meaning – which as a Marxist film-maker, he controlled – dismembering and reconstituting it, sweeping the spectator along with him, and thus verifying Marx's words (which he quotes in *Notes of a Film Director*) on the necessity for the investigation of truth itself to be true, on the means as part of the truth just as much as the result, on investigation as deployed and dispersed truth reuniting in the result.

Inasmuch as Pollet declares war on the meanings which weigh down the shots in *Méditerranée* with their whole cultural weight, he tends to adumbrate nothing but the film as meaning, to say nothing in the film but the work of the film.

Rivette: There is also the fact that the idea of meaning is 'progressist' in the context in which Eisenstein worked, whereas it functions in a reactionary way – as 'truth' – in Pollet's context (which is also ours): Eisenstein, and to a certain extent Solanas,[11] produce a film in a milieu where meaning is still relatively innocent (and they take this 'relative' strictly into account), whereas in our case, whether we like it or not, it is invariably taken up by the commercial market, accessory to the ideology of exchange.[12]

And one mustn't forget how Eisenstein has very consciously implemented his own 'text' through the perversion and transposition of an earlier text. Griffith was the first to draw the inferences from his historical situation, he made the first great synthesis (*Birth of a Nation*) of the implicit and random 'discoveries' of his predecessors; but his master-stroke remains that, having just completed *The Mother and the Law*, a film reflecting an unconsciously reactionary liberal ideology, he immediately adopted it as the mother cell and motor element of his next film, *Intolerance*: the very fact of interlacing four 'stories' into a single flow, of imposing the same law on four periods, of gradually substituting the single course of the film for the succession of stories (a 'gesture' of revelation/annulment that absolutely dominates the whole final reel), literally turns the meanings of the Ur-film upside down. It is this 'intuition' of Griffith's that Eisenstein, in full awareness, chose to adopt; perfecting in the light of Marxism what Griffith had only been able to portend within a bourgeois ideology, he undertook precisely the same operation with respect to this intuition as Marx did in relation to Hegel, and, through a systematic refraction and inversion of its data, gave the post-Dickensian guilty liberal conscience its full meaning as a class struggle.

Narboni: When Dreyer borrowed the thematic and construction of *Intolerance* to make *Leaves from Satan's Book*, he reconstituted a film with four different and quite distinct stories, chronologically told, failing to recognize the possibilities of reactivation, contamination and subversive interaction that the intermingling of the stories offered to Griffith. The latter is a typical example in film history of someone capable of producing a form or a concept without being able to formulate the theory of that concept correctly, and this is because the historical present in which he existed, the cultural and ideological text he inherited from his period, furnished him with neither the means nor the terrain, or even the need.[13]

Rivette: Yet as everyone knows, this 'theory' of montage – though its practice persists after a fashion here and there – whether American (but Griffith remained isolated; Stroheim and Vidor were already playing the 'stage' card – sound cinema, in other words) or Soviet (Eisenstein, Vertov,Dovzhenko), was virtually wiped out by the arrival of sound, despite the celebrated Manifesto of 1928. Yet on a basis of speech (Resnais, Godard)[14] or of 'direct' (Rouch, Leacock, Perrault and many others), the 'resumption' of Griffith/Eisenstein has been gradually taking place over the last ten years: diffuse, often confused or barely conscious, but representing a collective will to reactivate the idea of montage on the basis of – and in terms of – the knowledge acquired over the thirty intervening years.

Implicitly with Griffith, then explicitly with Eisenstein and with all film-makers who endeavour to be even moderately lucid as to the meanings of their work, to think the montage is to think the criticism of a pre-existing text: of a 'datum' which is itself – and this is what the process of the textual operations reveals – in fact only a fabrication.

Hence this working *hypothesis*: if all coherent thought concerning montage is *de facto* critical thought, doesn't any form of rejection or disregard of montage imply a theological mentality, in other words acceptance of the world as it is, and if not resignation, at least passive contemplation of *the being there* purely as presence, involving neither History nor mediation, with all the concepts of permanence and fate bound up with this ideology?

Of course to say that montage and critical thought go together may simply seem tautological; but what must be stressed is that it is the material work, the concrete manipulation of montage (as soon as this goes beyond the level of continuity and ellipsis, the narrative level of 'stylistic tricks') that 'generates' this work of critical thought, and this at *all* levels of the film, including some the film-maker probably hasn't considered: any questioning of the superstructures reverberates a shock on the level of the infrastructures. Another consequence: this critical movement is not limited to the result of its functioning in the film, for the film preserves it intact through the course of its development: not as an imprint (a fixed 'montage effect') but as a dynamic (montage as act) affecting the spectator as such; so it becomes impossible for him to abandon himself comfortably to the telling of a story, to the representation of a fable or pseudo-reality: he must, if he wants to read the film, assume responsibility in his turn for this critical work; if he wants to *see* the film, he must fulfil this responsibility.

Narboni: But the practice of montage is absolute manipulation, as an all-powerful technique of all-purpose arrangement, has long been – and continues to be – held as authoritarian, manipulative of the spectator on whom it supposedly imposes a series of univocal and unquestionable meanings. Broadly speaking, this was the attitude that lay behind the theories of André Bazin, who was for instance more responsive to the cinema of deep focus or the sequence-shot as being to his way of thinking more respectful both of the freedom of the spectator – whose eye and understanding are thereby not subjected to a strictly programmed course – and of the 'ambiguity of reality'. We realize today that when he wrote 'in analysing reality, montage assumed, through its very nature, a unity of meaning in the dramatic event', Bazin was right in so far as the work of someone like Pudovkin is concerned where the fragmentation of scenes, the breaking down into shots, never had any purpose other than carrying analysis to its extremes, dislocating a situation in order to dramatize or magnify it – but not Eisenstein, for whom it was a question each time of 'involving the spectator in the course of a process productive of meaning'. The integration of montage with visual space which Bazin recognized as the mark of modern cinema can be found in many Eisenstein scenes and many of his writings, just as Eisenstein's formula, 'the number of intervals determining the tensional pressure', could perfectly well apply to the examples on which Bazin based his analyses (Wyler's films, the kitchen sequence in *The*

Magnificent Ambersons, which were constructed on the principle of potential voltage difference and of the slow dramatic charge in the shots). The freedom allowed to the spectator in these films was never more than whatever freedom – guided, oriented between certain poles and strong-points perfectly disposed at intervals within the shot – the film-maker chose to grant him, before finally imposing a predetermined meaning which, because of his delay in conjuring it, might seem to have been discovered by the spectator himself. Here one finds the most extreme contradiction in Bazin's analyses, preoccupied on the one hand by a belief in the ambiguity of reality, and on the other by the conviction that an international language exists, a natural and hidden meaning to things which the cinema does not have to produce, whose advent it need only – by virtue of its own perception and persistence – apprehend.

Rivette: Historically, in fact, this notion of cinema as transparent, which can be resumed in the Renoir-Rossellini-Bazin trilogy, was itself established in reaction to a generalized 'perversion' (perversion in the ordinary sense, bourgeois perversion) of Eisensteinian practice; for what was Pudovkin doing if not simply adopting the husk of Eisenstein's theoretical principles and placing them at the service of storytelling, in tow to narrative: the montage effect is no longer 'utilized' except to lend greater effectiveness to a narrative subordinated to the development of character. By way of Pudovkin, this compromise and this caricature of the 'art of montage' was taken over by whole areas of the commercial cinema. (One may note how at the same time and in the same way – with the same finality orienting the same process – Pabst was instrumental in effecting the liquidation of expressionism in favour of the aesthetic of '*mise en scène*' as a formal bluff which even today still governs the entire European and Hollywood cinema: Clément, Preminger, Chukrai, Rosi. This technique of manipulating 'reality', where the director is the more or less invisible master, quickly ceased to be the art of montage to become the art of *découpage* (and concomitantly, of 'framing' and the 'direction of actors'). It was in fact against dictatorship in this area that Renoir or Rossellini took a stance, and not against montage, which with them is more of a censored area, a 'blank': the fact that the film-maker no longer has any need to go to his cutting-room, no longer feels this need, leads them in practice – and unconsciously, it would seem – to reinvest a part of this montage thought at the construction level, and more particularly at the stage of actual shooting. (Cf. the role of the sequence-shot or the mobility of the camera with these film-makers or Welles, Hitchcock and Mizoguchi, in contrast to the more generalized analytic technique, and as a structuring of levels and formal conflicts.)

So one might, very schematically, distinguish four moments: *invention* of montage (Griffith, Eisenstein), its deviation (Pudovkin-Hollywood: elaboration of the techniques of propaganda cinema), the rejection of propaganda (a rejection loosely or closely allied to long takes, direct sound, amateur or auxiliary actors, non-linear narrative, heterogeneity of genres, elements or techniques, etc), and finally, what we have been observing over the last ten years, in other words the attempt to 'salvage', to re-inject into contemporary methods the spirit and the *theory* of the first period, though without rejecting the contribution made by the third, but rather trying to cultivate one through the other, to dialectize them and, in a sense, to *edit* them.

Narboni: Eisenstein, Pudovkin: today we must no longer think of the opposition between them in the generally agreed terms, categories and relationships – intellectual montage/lyrical montage, cinema-cry/cinema-song, dominant creativity/dominant theory – but according to their particular conceptions of the dynamics of cinema as revealed in their films and clarified in their writings. Here a decisive text must be quoted: 'The basic element of Soviet cinema, its specific problem, is montage. Montage is neither a means of showing or narrating, fragment by fragment as a mason stacks up bricks (Kuleshov), nor a method for developing an idea through a succession of shots (Pudovkin's lyrical principle). The idea must result from the clash between two independent elements.' From this we can see very clearly what differentiates Eisenstein's *écriture* – successive transformative effects whose motor elements are linked by dynamic signs of correlation and integration, where the operations actualized are multiplicatory and productive, where the collision between two elements engenders, through a crucial leap, a new concept – from that of Pudovkin, a chain of shots each in turn carrying a single idea in a simple process of summation. What therefore distinguishes a multidimensional space and time, structured according to the principles of a complex polyphony, a signifying purpose, a volume in constant expansion, a scenography, from a spuriously dialectic linear time? I shall borrow a question and answer from L. Althusser: 'How can a dialectic be late? Only on condition that it is the other name for consciousness' . . . '*there is* – in the strict sense – *no* dialectic of consciousness opening, by virtue of its own contradictions, on to reality itself . . . For the consciousness attains reality not through its internal development but through a radical discovery of *the other than self*'. It is this *other* of the consciousness that Pudovkin never attained. A film like *Mother*, for example, centred on a *central* character, a consciousness embodying within itself all the circumstances of the drama, quite unjustifiably assumes the mask of a dialectical and Marxist film inasmuch as Pudovkin's cinema was subject to a simple narrative logic which prevented it from bringing multiple, discontinuous temporalities – merely time governed by a uniform successiveness – into play.

Narboni/Rivette: All of which leads us to re-examine this theme of the 'awakening consciousness' and to expose its complicity with the method whereby Pudovkin 'progresses' in his work only by following the thread of an idea which runs through the film like a watermark, and which is never *produced* by the shots, merely transmitted by them. If we compare

Mother and *The General Line*, it can be seen that the former tells the story (is the *narrative*) of a character whose view of the world is gradually modified by accumulations from the various phases and circumstances of the plot (a story such as Ford, for example, could tell – better – in *The Grapes of Wrath*; but cf. in counter-verification, Brecht's version of the same Gorki text); whereas the latter makes us witness, and collaborate in, a *metamorphosis* through a series of mutations of the 'mediator-protagonist' who punctuates the course of the film – and who is no longer a character but a node of forces and acts: *actor* (acted on/acting), and functions in the organization of the sequences like a word being transformed and exhausting all its possibilities one after the other: a consciousness no longer central, which never at any moment reflects or dominates the situation in its entirety, but is presented each time as an *effect* of the dynamic of the film. No 'scene' shows or demonstrates a particular stage (conscious and considered) in the peasant woman's 'long and hard road'; it is praxis alone that modifies her state; it is because the tractor breaks down that she makes (that she undergoes) the decisive qualitative leap: she is then at a stage Z corresponding to the final point in her evolution as a peasant (by jumps from the 'alientated peasant' stage to that of 'enlightened peasant'), the tractor stops, the mechanic rips up her skirt, stripping her of the rags of her present condition, to use the strips as rags (which thus have a part in cleaning the engine), and there is here a sudden, unexpected leap: she *is* a tractor-driver. (And the whole end of the film is simply montage of herself with herself: her successive *aspects* matching with the image of her 'final' (within the term of the film) transformation. The character, far from subjecting the logic of the narrative to the laws of its thought processes, is produced by the transformational mechanism of the sequences.[15]

Narboni: It is inconceivable that this discontinuity in the evolution shown in the peasant woman was a secondary discontinuity, achieved as an afterthought by eliminating intermediary stages and linking passages which had been filmed, that it was intended as something in the order of an ellipse or stylistic effect. It could happen with Eisenstein that during shooting, with a view to montage and with an idea in mind, he accumulated considerably more filmic material than he intended to retain; he frequently left possibilities open for unforeseen articulations, new concatenations, valencies to be saturated; while editing, he might breach and leave gaps in continuity previously filmed, retaining only certain stages of a movement, moments of a trajectory, highlights of a situation: but it is inconceivable, in this particular case of the peasant woman in *The Old and the New*, that he could have filmed it with the genesis of her evolution faithfully respected in its continuity. His strict application of the Marxist theories of the leap, of the sudden break as a revolutionary moment of total renewal, undoubtedly prohibited him from doing so.

Rivette: A detour, whereby we might perhaps come back to the problematic of the relationship between 'direct' and montage; for a film like *Pour la suite du monde* shows very clearly how Perrault (like Rouch) was very soon able to go beyond the stage of montage as simply selecting and ordering material by definition overabundant in relation to the 'projected' film, and how the film, over and above its value as a document, acquires a poetic quality only in so far as this material is reworked throughout in very precise formal patterns, while at the same time itself suggesting these patterns and informing them dialectically; this both on the level of shot-to-shot relationships, and in the structuring of the film in movements (musical) and chapters (fictional or thematic). Which is even more explicit in *Le Règne du jour*, just as the creative intervention of montage is more flagrant in *La Chasse au lion à l'arc* than in *Jaguar* or *Moi un Noir*: the latter are closer to the chronicle form, the former to the epic form.

Another point arising from the preceding, another similarity: just as montage looms large on the horizon even at the pre-shooting stage for Eisenstein (all the more so during the shooting, if only in the sometimes systematic use of multiple cameras: cf. Noël Burch's article, 'Fonctions de l'aléa', *Cahiers du Cinéma* no. 194 [16]), so the direct film-maker accumulates matter *for* the montage, with a view to the re-examination of this raw material and its destruction as such. This attitude plays the same motor role with Cassavetes, even though it is within a dramaturgical perspective (but a dramaturgy exposed, radically undermined by the use of such material: deflected and turned inside out) that it performs its task of intercepting the 'text' (the pre-text at this stage, in its first state of 'eruption', closely scrutinized by the meaning).[17]

Contrariwise, in the case of *Not Reconciled*, one can see that the montage is detailed with absolute precision, how Straub has tightened or loosened each liaison, played on variations of tempi and so on – in other words, materialized the *principle* of the film on the editola – but also how only what was strictly necessary in view of the 'anticipated' film was shot, how the film therefore pre-existed its matter from the moment of its *écriture*; but at the same time one must note how this work of condensation, choice and re-ordering was in fact effected on the basis of an extensive source material (i.e Böll's text, *Billiards at Half-Past Nine*, which here undergoes an operation of reduction, dislocation and conversion which no longer has anything to do with what is normally called 'adaptation'): here, therefore, the preparatory work of *écriture* functions as montage. [18]

Moreover, Straub imposes on the spectator (the virgin spectator viewing the film for the first time, at any rate, but also in part at subsequent viewings) an obscurity in the language, which seems wilfully indirect, apparently unaware of him as the addressee (even if he nevertheless, though tacitly, fulfils his task), and which prevents him from direct attainment of the 'knowledge' it seemed to be entrusted with bringing him;[19] the film functions before him as a dream, one might say, as the product of *an* unconscious (but whose unconscious? Does it belong to the literary text? To fifty years of German history? The Straubs? The 'characters' in the film?), whose structure comprises only multiple recrossings and literal echoes, the ultimate play on words and/or images, all the informational elements also being annexed to the puzzle, though dislocated, secreted, shuffled: for instance the central monologue by the mother (who is, not by chance, at the point where all the components of the *fasces* [20] converge and diverge), discourse of a space-time where all times and all spaces are collided and compounded (reabsorbed by a process of montage/mixing).

Now, it was a very similar problematic that faced us when we reviewed *Gertrud* a few hours later: if Dreyer's film, more 'logical', in any case more chronological, doesn't function formally as a dream, it nevertheless also prescribes[21] an 'oneiric' vocabulary: at once the *telling* of a dream and a session of *analysis* (an analysis in which the roles are unceasingly changing; subjected to the flow, the regular tide of the long takes, the mesmeric passes of the incessant camera movements, the even monotone of the voices, the steadiness of the eyes – always turned aside, often parallel, towards us: a little above us – the strained immobility of the bodies, huddled in armchairs, on sofas behind which the other silently stands, fixed in ritual attitudes which make them no more than corridors for speech to pass through, gliding through a semi-obscurity arbitrarily punctuated with luminous zones into which the somnambulists emerge of their own accord . . .).[22] So, two films which impose, by converging routes, the same analogy between their functioning (their *operation*) and that of 'all' that is implied by the word unconscious; but at the same time, two films where the basic work seems to have taken place at the level of the *intention* and the *écriture* (with Straub, pulverization of the original text; with Dreyer, condensation and 'concentration' of this text),[23] but films, finally, where the moment of the montage 'acts' as the fulfilment of this work, but also as an intervention by the *arbitrary*. Now, this 'enigmatic' function of montage, constant with Dreyer, always operates in his work through the 'imposition' of gaps (marks of censorship?): cf. how the beginnings and ends of each shot in *Master of the House* are systematically interrupted, chopped, cut off, *in* the movement (invariably lacunary in part), each articulation 'false' by a few frames; cf., even more so, the whole of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and how, from *Vampyr* to *Ordet*, Dreyer arrests and cuts off almost all his camera movements en route; cf., finally, in *Gertrud*, the three or four cut-ellipses at the junctures of two long takes, tranquilly intervening within the supposed continuity of the scene: tantalizing cuts, deliberately disturbing, which mean that the spectator is made to wonder where Gertrud 'went'; well, she went *in* the splice. And perhaps it is through this deliberate desire to introduce, at the montage stage (instead of limiting himself to having it recopy the pre-shooting text, or like Bresson limiting it to a role that is above all 'musical'), into the *écriture*, no matter how precise and closely controlled it may have been in the earlier stages, these cuts, these ruptures, these leaps: this irrational – that the 'passage' of the unconscious, trapped by the literal game, is effected.

Narboni: The reference to music just made in connection with Bresson may also be applied to all of Straub's films, which are so rife with preoccupations tending in this direction, so essentially a search for possible homologies. One might cite, more or less at random, the distribution and proportionment of tempi, the alternation of zones of tension and release, of dense nuclei and silent expanses, the complex and variable interplay of autonomy and interdependence among the 'cells', the composition in large blocks or pinpoint elements, the combination of solidly built structures with other 'freer' ones, and finally, the application of the principle never belied by Stravinsky, *the rejection of expressivity*. Let us recall the terms, equally valid for all of Straub's films, in which Stockhausen wrote about *Machorka-Muff*: 'What interested me above all in your film was the composition of the film-time – it is closely related to music. You have achieved good durational proportions between the scenes where the events are almost without movement – how astonishing that a film which is relatively taut and brief should have the courage of slow tempi, pauses, rests – and those where they are extemely fast – how dazzling to have chosen for these the newspaper cuttings displayed at all angles on the screen. What's more, the relative density of the changes of tempo is well done. You have let each element arrive at its *own* irreplaceable moment; and there is no ornamentation. "Everything is essential," as Webern said in similar circumstances (but everything in its time, one should add) . . . I like the sharpness of the film, the strangely flashing movement of the camera in the street scenes, and the empty walls of the hotel room on which the camera comes to rest for long periods, that bareness from which it cannot break away. I also like the "unreal" condensation of time, and yet one never feels hurried. Progress is only possible on that ridge between truth, concentration and that sharpening which penetrates by burning into our perception of reality . . .'

Valid for the twenty-minute account of a day in the life of a West German officer – a day particularly rich in incident – these remarks could apply equally well to the treatment, to the transformation into fifty-five minutes of film of fifty no less busy years of German history (*Not Reconciled*), or of thirty years of intense musical creativity into an hour and a half's flow of images and sounds (*The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*). One can simply try to discover the function assigned by Straub to this treatment of time: what is the *rhyme* or reason for this combination of overloaded signifying nodes, saturated with information (sometimes to the limits of our capacity for assimilation, our speed in deciphering them), with the pauses, the 'sustained notes', the empty fringes, the blemishes and 'unnecessary' temporal effusions, the vacant passages (which can come at the beginning or the end of a shot, and sometimes exercise a shot in its entirety, in the insistence on its progression). One seems to be able to divide this function into three registers, to link it to (at least) three orders of preoccupation: 1. *structural, rhythmic, compositional*: interplay of continuity/discontinuity, of retention/protension, conducted on the model of the 'lacunary body';[24] 2. *anti-expressive*: referring therefore to Stravinsky's phrase suggesting that music is incapable of expressing anything whatsoever, with as corollary the 'empty' shots (though not necessarily empty of characters), voided of everything that might involve ascendancy of meaning, domination of a prior intent; 3. *transformational*: on the one hand, the time specific to the film effects the takeover and mutation to its own behalf of chronological, referential, 'vital' time, but in order to validate this strictly filmic regime (to succeed, for example, in conveying a whole life in an hour and a half, to give the impression that it is unfolding and not merely captured at certain privileged and emblematic moments), it must also reinvest this time of life in shots whose rhythm and continuity seem to adhere to it. It must mark, alongside the gulfs and breaches into which ('vital') duration is swallowed up from sight, moments where one has the impression that it has time to pass into the film time. An effect one might call 'effect of temporal reality', engendering a very particular type of suspense, without finality, which acts on us as a power to recharge and reactivate, subjecting our attention to a beating, throbbing flow.

Rivette: And a purely formal suspense: what is the shot going to be? – and not: what is going to be in the shot? At the same time, this desire to *empty* certain shots, to have a shot filled with information followed by one which seems to offer none, or, likewise, the proliferation of false information at certain points (false because non-referential in the context of the film, non-'informative': false trails where the reader's memory and powers of concentration lose their way – the mass of proper names, the paprika . . .), all this seems to me to form part of what enables the film to function as an account of the unconscious. The film must be over before its reading (its re-reading) can be started; the telling of the dream must be finished so that the analysis, setting aside all non-literal matter, can discover the recurring, genuinely significant elements, together with the slips of the tongue, the masks, the metamorphoses, the censorships.

Translated by Tom Milne

Notes

1 'Montage' was originally printed in *Cahiers* in four columns, with the main text in the two centre columns and the notes in the outside columns, creating an effect of 'montage'. It has not been possible to reproduce this lay-out here, but the notes are integral to the text.

2 In the initial stages of our (attempt at) systematic reflection, our reading of the first issue in the 'Change' series, entitled *Le Montage*, and even more particularly the very fact of its appearance, were extemely influential and, as it were, encouraging. For, keeping all due proportion in mind, what we were trying to do in examining montage more specifically in the cinema was to establish ourselves within the same general problematic; that is, an enquiry into all notions of liaison, juxtaposition, combinative (and their corollaries; difference, rupture, analysis). An enquiry which we too hoped would implement itself both through our analysis of the films themselves and through the play (itself combinative, in that it set up multiple transitions from one film to another) of this analysis. (Author's note.)

3 Here, it became evident after the discussions at Aix, one must consider two negative directions: montage attenuated by the length of the shots (*Gertrud* and *Marie pour mémoire*) and montage made unobtrusive by a continuity – narrative or musical – which obliterates the passages from one shot to the next (*The Empress Yang Kwei Fei* and *La Règle du jeu*). In the first case (attenuated montage), the paucity of liaisons can of course be tactical: the montage is all the more concerted in that it is sparing of its means and effects. In the second (unobtrusive montage), the montage is concerned to make one forget its presence, to conceal its function of discontinuity. In both cases, therefore, the negative idea can be reversed: to attentuate the montage, or make it unobtrusive, is still on occasion a montage tactic. (Author's note.)

4 A misconception is still rife which one would have thought should have been cleared up long ago: the identification of montage (in its active effects) with *rapid* montage, thus assuming that the work of montage necessarily implies the proliferation and atomization of shots. In the silent Soviet cinema, the fragmentation of scenes might at a pinch mobilize the attention sufficiently to obscure the rigorous work of articulation between one sequence and the next (as we know, however, this construction was of prime importance for Eisenstein and Dovzhenko), but it is difficult to see why this unwarrantable identification of montage with short, sharp, staccato discontinuity should have continued in currency over the last ten years. For a sizeable portion of the modern cinema is concerned with the movement of compact blocks, the arrangement of long, continuous effluxions, the gradual and carefully controlled imbrication of homogeneous parts, of narrative elements that seem themselves to be seeking and indicating their most appropriate position within the overall system of the film. *La Chinoise* is a characteristic example of this sort of film, where no definite intention pre-existed the arrangement of its parts, where the logic of the narrative has imposed its authority rather than been itself imposed by the 'author', creating its own connections, entailing the inclusion of one element or the rejection of another through the movement of its own genesis, tentative, hesitant, finally infallible, each block that is displaced retaining the trace of its passage and its redistributions, the imprint, the mark of the combinative. The montage, consequently, is not work on a pre-existing material, but work by that material, self-fashioning, self-productive, at once mould and matter, locus of movement and sum of the constituent elements of this movement.

Marie pour mémoire: similar in certain ways to *La Chinoise*: homogeneous blocks, undivided, units displacing themselves as index throughout the still absent matrix of the montage (becoming, at their point of insertion, designated object instead of index). The montage thus cannot be said to be better or worse than it might have been (a normative illusion that refers a product back to a perfect and definitive model) since, being what it is, it also comprises its own attributes. What can one deduce from this? 1. All charges made against Garrel's work to the effect that it falls into the category of symbolism are suspect (it is, on the contrary, *literal* in the quality of its materiality: the body translated to the letter, the letter translated to the body). A radical differentiation must be made here between 'symbolism' as a fixed and rigid system, and 'the symbolic' as understood by Lacan: which is mobile, constantly shifting and substituting, leeway for signifiers. 2. This idea of montage as being *what it is* cannot result where the film-maker simply decides this is how it should be; it derives its necessity from the *work*, whose locus it has been, whose imprint it retains, as if a profound, muffled upheaval had taken place and persists in the final form of the film (each shot wins its place itself). Work, in Garrel's case, that is to be understood in its gynaecological sense of labour: just as the woman in childbed retains the perturbations of her pregnant state over long months, so with the film: mingled tranquillity and ferment. And birth, the fertilization of the shots, has occurred in every way, reciprocally and against the grain as well (thus, in the film, Marie is mother, wife and daughter to Jesus).

In *La Concentration* another process took place. Shut away with his actors and crew in a tiny studio, Garrel filmed for three whole days without interruption. At one point, with tension, fatigue and other imposed conditions all playing their part, he began to fear that the sequence of shots (which were also to form the chronological sequence of the film, since he had for the first time pre-planned his montage) might be overloaded with too great a charge of intensity. So he changed the order of shooting, first filming the end, then the penultimate section. Is this *montage generating the shooting* and its methods? (Author's note.)

5 One can perhaps get an inkling from Chytilova's film of how the very principle of montage risks becoming a principle of rejection and suppression – and not merely of elision, but quite literally of subtraction, erasure, or even impediment and 'persecution' (of the spectator-voyeur: thus Eisenstein refused to let him contemplate the trajectory of a gesture, and forced him to create an 'idea' of the action while refusing him the pleasure and short-circuiting its conditions). Thus montage doesn't mean adding but withdrawing (and *the withdrawal* in action), not doing but un-doing: the negative at work. The film should be seen as a *residuum*, the network of traces left by the dual process of an action (the shooting, a process of accumulation) and its negation (the montage, a process of consumption): the latter thus functions by 'intaglio', not as the absence but the act of hollowing itself, the effacement, the movement of retreat, of the Other.

At its extreme, film is the rejection of film, its contradiction (its 'anti-film'?): only the milestones remain, the tokens of its 'passage', forever past/future; just as the film in the projector exists only through the effacement of one by the other, the incessant difference, the consumption-destruction of all its 'images': a false presence, a deception constantly renewed, constantly deferred. The montage is the functioning of this deception. (Author's note.)

6 The extremism of this systematic could be quite well represented by a film like Taylor Mead's *European Diary* which, filmed image by image, can save itself the bother of an editing stage and be edited as it is shot. The extreme rapidity

of the liaisons goes so far as to prohibit even perception of each shot. The spectator, ruthlessly left all at sea, is gripped by a dizzying monotony. But then another discourse may perhaps establish itself (if the spectator brings a certain goodwill to it, or helps out with a certain protective conscience), not in the film but in the spectator himself, on the strength of infra-perceived fragments of film. Like those complicated, overabundant dreams that are immediately forgotten on waking (a).

a) Opposite perspective: Andy Warhol's (more) celebrated (than seen) *Chelsea Girls*. Absolute non-montage, since the film is merely the alternation or juxtaposition (ordered by chance) of reels exactly as they left the camera, uncut and including both unforeseen accidents and reel-ends; and yet the simple fact of projection, therefore of the successions and the simultaneity (through the coexistence of the two screens) of raw shots *creates* montage: different each time, but inescapable. As though one couldn't leave the circle, as if it were impossible to break the montage's seal. (J. R.)

7 With Cassavetes the use of montage is very different: naturalistic. (As Jean Narboni rightly says, Cassavetes' work is a 'natural expressionism'.) What has to be expressed is edginess, doubts, hesitations, illuminations, fleeting and contradictory expressions, lassitudes, irritations, idle moments, and bursts of activity succeeding one another as they do in life. The montage becomes the privileged means: the instrument of touch. And the phrase is used only barely metaphorically: in painting, a touch of green brings a *realistic* contradiction to red. One of those contradictions brought to life out of respect for life. It isn't a question of nuance (nothing is more assertive than nuance), but rather of a war waged, by tremors and hesitations, on meaning in its living inexactitude. (Author's note.)

8 To be understood, in the circumstances, in its gymnastic and sporting sense rather than the Marxist one, I presume (as we shall be using it later). (J.N.)

9 Cf. Jean Narboni's criticism further on of this correlation of shot and word; but it is a fact that Pollet wanted to take each element in the film – Venice, operating table, Greek temple – to its most exteme point of 'purity' (and modesty): like the words in the Mallarmé-ish poem (the reference to *Un Coup de dés* is explicit through Sollers' text), polished, orbited, crystallized as though cut off from any lexicographic impurities. Whereas Godard works to *destroy* this minimum element (this moneme): similarly Joyce 'worked on' his words both from 'within' and in the dictionary context: dismembered, dissected, collided, commingled. (Author's note.)

10 Even through its title, Chytilova's film also poses a question (questions). It is remarkable, actually, how almost all the titles of these films are 'signifiers' of their functioning: *About Something Else*, of course, but also *The Old and the New* (which are at work, and in conflict, in each sequence, each cell, each frame), *Not Reconciled* (true of each shot, locked in on its own cognizance: deliberate banishment of compromise from the Adenauer world, tranquil rejection of a sham harmony). *Intolerance, Made in USA, Pour la suite du monde, Méditerranée* ('sea surrounded by land' . . .): each of these titles is like a 'directions for use' for the film. Whereas *Gertrud, The Empress Yang Kwei Fei*, are merely labels (though it would certainly be easy to find Renoir or Rossellini, but also Ford or Dreyer films with ambivalent titles like this, more or less clearly indicating the same awareness of form as being the 'content of form' . . .). (J.R.)

11 And it is precisely in this distance maintained by Pollet with regard to

Eisenstein (his rejection of the dictatorship of meaning) that the case of Solanas should be considered. In *The Hour of the Furnaces* there is an extremely violent dictatorship of the discourse (implemented chiefly by the montage of sound and image). Those of us accustomed, in a French context, to the idea that an obligatory meaning is a reactionary principle, are therefore suddenly required to go an extremely long way in adjusting the relativity of our reasoning. As far, in fact, as bringing it directly into touch with the current situation in Argentina. Is this meaning, then (that Peronism, as an already existing force for regrouping the popular masses, should be the starting-point for propaganda and revolutionary action) to be imposed on the Argentinians? I confess I have no idea. But *in any case* doesn't the very notion of political violence (a revolution, for instance, but it could equally well be to do with reaction or fascism) itself impose, as a corollary, the notion of violence in meaning? So the production of an obligatory meaning would no longer have to be considered reactionary, but one would have to consider nothing but this meaning. Are we forced into this regression by politics themselves? Is the notion of an open work, in other words, one of the last manifestations of Western liberalism? Or must we examine *the contexts* of the work yet again with greater stringency? (S.P.)

12 Cf. the authoritative articles by Jean-Joseph Goux: 'Marx et l'Inscription du travail', 'Numismatiques' (*Tel Quel*, nos. 33, 35, 36). (Author's note.)

13 Conversely, we know the way in which Eisenstein took over Lang's *Dr Mabuse*, to re-edit and *correct* it. We also know how, in order to give it its full political meaning, he betrayed Dreiser's novel *An American Tragedy*: 'Undoubtedly a first-class novel – although not, from our point of view, a class novel' – stripping it of all vaguely 'progressist' ideology that encumbered it, instead of giving his producers 'an uncomplicated whodunit with a good murder and a nice love story' (of course they turned it down). (*Notes of a Film Director*). (Author's note.)

14 Note how it is the same desire to annex to the contemporary 'vocabulary' of film, in one case the texts of Duras, Robbe-Grillet, Cayrol, but for the other the speech that is most threatened (everyday, contingent, trivial, transient) – which seems to constrain them to rediscover the techniques of discontinuity.(Author's note.)

15 Neither the Russian release title (*The Old and the New*) nor the title Eisenstein wanted to use (*The General Line*) give a correct account of the real dynamic and overall system of the film, in that both titles still belong to the category of linear and continuous time, progressively generated, the time of historical succession (a succession broken in the release title by the sudden shift to the New, a movement of dogged progress towards Communism in Eisenstein's title). The film, on the contrary, functioning through blocks and ensembles, through discontinuous series, is never bisected once and for all by the miraculous line which supposedly marks the definitive passage from Old to New (a type of 'progress' characteristic of 'liberal' American films, complying with the ideology of an unbroken history guided by some starry horizon of enlightenment); each scene, moreover, is itself traversed by this Old/New line, the movement is one of more and more radical leaps from scene to scene, each one embodying all its predecessors before being absorbed in its turn. This movement might be resumed diagrammatically.

S(1)	S(2)
Old/New	Old/New
Old	New

Thus one sees that the film, itself, in its entirety, and only at its end, can be described as 'the New', with the important reservation that no sooner has the last shot faded than the film is surrendered in its turn to the Old, demanding that its revolutionary movement be in its turn taken up, extended, pursued by each spectator, and this time in *life*.

The impossibility of representing the movement of Eisenstein's film in our unidimensional Western language clearly demonstrates the extent to which the film effected a breach in History (history of the cinema, its storytelling) through the establishment of a volumetric space, a plural time, a complex topology. (J.N.)

16 See 'Chance and Its Functions' in *Theory of Film Practice* by Noël Burch (Secker & Warburg, 1973, pp.105–21).

17 Of what is direct (sound/cinema) the 'proof'? Cf. in particular 'Le détour par le direct' (Jean-Louis Comolli, *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 209). Direct sound = sign of the eruption of a fragment of 'reality', evidence of the operation of interception at a certain precise moment in History (hic et nunc, but also past/elsewhere) of some fortuity: the *take* is a product by machine of the 'event', a primitive inscription by encounter: hence the rushes, the nascent stage of the film. And montage = tactic for encounters between successive sound-images, but at the same time between soundtrack and visual track, towards 'the' film in its posthumous state. Dual dual-process, and productivity through bringing into contact (into conflict) these two re-fissured 'blocks': film 1 and film 2 (in front/behind the camera co-existence/succession of images-sounds). A dual intersection spatializing the process of the film (a dynamic 'cube') on all spatio-temporal vectors. (Author's note.)

18 It should be noted, moreover, that it was through the action of the oral discourse which governs the film – or rather the 'series' of fragmentary discourses – that Straub found himself forced, as it were (after a first chronological 'treatment'), into his definitive construction. (Author's note.)

19 Not through any desire for obscurity, but on the contrary because it pushes to their point of fusion, simultaneously, all the functions (rigour of the liaisons, autonomy of the elements) which are more commonly used only in succession and in a looser manner, and reduces – too much, all things considered – the area of imprecision to which one is accustomed; likewise there is a Mallarmé-ish *side* to the text which is 'obscure' only by sheer force of speed and logic, by force of clarity. (Author's note.)

20 A form which 'explains itself' since it is Fascism that is in question here. In the same spirit, I must confess I cannot resist the temptation to write: in so far as the film is structured as a language, it acts as though (it mimes the action of an) unconscious. (Author's note.)

21 This is unequivocally signalled both by the nightmare with the dogs (and its recurrence in the tapestry) and by the very specific allusions to Charcot's group and methods of hypnotism (Author's note.)

22 What is suggested here about Dreyer could probably be applied equally well (with all the evident changes and 'corrections' made) to Mizoguchi: but the film we should have seen again is *Ugetsu Monogatari* or *The Life of Oharu*, rather than *The Empress Yang Kwei Fei*. Let us simply recall here the phenomenon of

gliding between multiple levels, abetted by the indecisiveness, the instability of the 'signs' marking each of these levels, with which the movement of the film and most of its elements are informed . . . (Author's note.)

23 A question must then arise (a question that remains open here): can films where the formal work intervenes only at the montage stage, without previous work on the *écriture*, relate back so directly to the workings of the unconscious? *Méditerranée* certainly 'works' on the unconscious (the reader's), but does it function as such? Or again: if there is retrenchment of the pre-text, can there be a 'return' of the repressed? (Author's note.)

24 One can compare the 'holes' productive of 'silences' in Webern, of which Boulez said that they did not act simply as elements of rhythm, but modify the neighbouring sounds, acting on the morphology of pitch. 'Silence' in Straub's films has a similar operative function, being not merely pause, scansion, but acting on the 'frequency', the vibration of the preceding shot (or beginning of the shot of which it is the end) and the one following (or continuation of the following shot where it is the beginning). (Author's note.)

2 Jean-Pierre Oudart: 'Cinema and Suture'

('La Suture', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 211 and 212, April and May 1969)

I

Bresson's fundamental discovery, foreshadowed in *Pickpocket* and asserted in *The Trial of Joan of Arc,* was of a cinematic articulation irreducible to any other, which we shall call suture.

Suture represents the closure of the cinematic *énoncé* [1] in line with its relationship with its subject (the filmic subject or rather the cinematic subject), which is recognized, and then put in its place as the spectator – thus distinguishing the suture from all other types of cinema, particularly the so-called 'subjective' cinema, where the suture did exist, but undefined theoretically. At first film-makers had only experimented quite intuitively with the effects of the profound necessity of suture, but not with its causes which remained hidden given the subjective conception they had of the image and their confusion of the filmic subject with the filmed subject. Having determined the filmic subject, Bresson, no less radically than Godard, has put the filmed subject back in its place as signifying object. However – and this distinguishes his work from the whole of modern cinema – Bresson gives more than he took away; he puts the filmed subject within a structure and in a symbolic place which are those of cinema per se, no longer as a fictive subject located in an illusory existential relationship with its surroundings, but as the actor in a representation whose symbolic dimension is revealed in the process of reading and viewing.

Suture is best understood through a consideration of what is at stake in the process of 'reading' film. The properties of the image manifested there and revealed in particular by the 'subjective' cinema are currently being not so much challenged as repressed (with the result that they are then often 're-revealed' in the research of young film-makers such as Pollet). These characteristics mean that the cinema itself engenders the cinematic, that the image of its own accord enters the order of the signifier, and that by and in this process of reading are determined the properties, the conditions and the limits of its signifying power. Such a recognition should entail once more questioning the theoretical problems of the cinematic and of signification in the cinema. To understand this demands reading the image to its detriment, a reading with which the contemporary cinema has sometimes made us lose our familiarity, since its use of images without depth hides what the depth-of-field cinema revealed all the time: that every filmic field traced by the camera and all objects revealed through depth of field – even in a static shot – are echoed by another field, the fourth side, and an absence emanating from it.

Quite simply, then, and prior almost to any semantic consideration, we are given access to the *logic* of the cinematic by means of this second reading which reveals the functioning of its images. Every filmic field is echoed by an absent field, the place of a character who is put there by the viewer's imaginary, and which we shall call the Absent One. At a certain moment of the reading all the objects of the filmic field combine together to form the signifier of its absence. At this key-moment the image enters the order of the signifier, and the undefined strip of film the realm of the discontinous, the 'discrete'. It is essential to understand this, since up to now film-makers believed that, by resorting to cinematic units as discrete as possible, they would find their way back to the rules of linguistic discourse, whereas it is cinema itself, when designating itself as cinematography, which tends to constitute its own *énoncé* in 'discrete' units.

In a second phase, the signifier of absence, like a frozen letter, is given as a signifying Sum, the whole of the image tending to form an autonomous unit of absolute signification: a fundamentally poor signification, like that of a discourse, which is spelt out, more like a signifying diagram than actual speech. At this stage of the reading the signifier, abstracted from the filmic field, is not yet anchored to it. It has become a floating signifying Sum, certain of whose images (those whose symbolic character gives them a real semantic autonomy, as for instance in Lang) demonstrate the tendency to abstract themselves from the chain of the *énoncé*, or rather not to be integrated within it.

It is therefore easy to see the difficulties of a cinematic discourse which, like that of most film-makers, is a simple articulation of successive shots. For, if two consecutive images do not tend towards articulation together, but instead function initially as autonomous cells (although, being victims of linguistic habits, we believe the opposite to be true), then their articulation can only be produced by an extra-cinematic element (i.e. a linguistic *énoncé*) or by the presence of common signifying elements in each image. In both cases, the formation of the syntagm demands a redundancy of the signified (which must not be confused with the duplication of the signifier without which, as we shall see later, the reading of film would be impossible); this inevitably entails a substantial loss of 'information' and a real fissure between the elements forming the chain of the discourse and those unarticulated, excessive elements which end up forming a magma which paralyses the film by its inertia. In *La Chinoise* Godard poetically exasperates this fissure between what might be called the 'thing' of the image and its fragile and precious signs, between its reified discourse and the background of opaqueness against which it stands out and to which colour give a quasi-pictorial density.

The opposite of such a form of the cinematic is that which we encounter in *The Trial of Joan of Arc,* where the most important principle, made familiar by the 'subjective' cinema, is that the images are not first mutually articulated, but that the filmic field is articulated by the absent field, that is the imaginary field of the film. This then raises the problem of the suture, which (to avoid the ambiguity present in Bresson's subsequent work) will be defined as follows: prior to any semantic 'exchange' between two images (Bresson asserts that images must only have an 'exchange' value), and within the framework of a cinematic *énoncé* constructed on a shot/reverse-shot principle, the appearance of a lack perceived as a Some One (the Absent One) is followed by its abolition by someone (or something) placed within the same field – everything happening within the same shot or rather within the filmic space defined by the same take. This is the fundamental fact from which effects derive. As a result the field of Absence becomes the field of the Imaginary of the filmic space, formed by the two fields, the absent one and the present one; the signifier is echoed in that field and retroactively anchors itself in the filmic field; the 'exchange' Bresson talks of takes place between these two fields, at which point the *signified* truly appears. Therefore the suture (the abolition of the Absent One and its resurrection in someone) has a dual effect. On the one hand it is essentially retroactive on the level of the signified, since it presides over a semantic exchange between a present field and an imaginary field, representing the field now occupied by the former – within the more or less rigid framework of the shot/reverse-shot. On the other hand, it is anticipatory on the level of the signifier; for, just as the present filmic segment was constituted as a signifying unit by the Absent One, that something or someone, replacing it, anticipates on the necessarily 'discrete' nature of the unit whose appearance it announces.

In fact the fundamental cinematic figures of *The Trial of Joan of Arc* should not be called shot/reverse-shot because they no longer have anything in common with those of the 'subjective' cinema, which realized very quickly that it could only use them obliquely, lest they denounce its fiction. In fact one of the only true shot/reverse-shot series in the history of the cinema is the aberrant series in *Kriemhild's Revenge,* where the protagonists seem unreal because of Lang's categorical refusal to allow the camera to move from the position of their viewpoint. In *The Trial of Joan of Arc* the camera's obliqueness, at last openly admitted and established as a system (if only Bresson's curious idea of the unique point of view from which an object demands to be filmed were simply about the need to search for the right angle, the right margin of obliqueness for the camera), reveals by and for whom the operation of suture works: the filmic subject, the spectator, from a place which, although remaining empty when he vanishes into the filmic field, must nevertheless be kept for him throughout the film; otherwise the spectator may fail to fulfil the role of imaginary subject of the cinematic discourse, a role which is only possible from a locus displaced in relation to the field of the Imaginary and the place of the Absent One, since the spectator is not the Absent One.

The spectator is doubly decentred in the cinema. First what is enunciated, initially, is not the viewer's own discourse, nor anyone else's: it is thus that he comes to posit the signifying object as the signifier of the absence of anyone. Secondly the unreal space of the enunciation leads to the necessary quasi-disappearance of the subject as it enters its own field and thus submerges, in a sort of hypnotic continuum in which all possibility of discourse is abolished, the relation of alternating eclipse which the subject has to its own discourse; and this relation then demands to be represented within the process of reading the film, which it duplicates.

Nothing can be said about the relationship between the subject and the filmic field itself, since nothing is said *in its process*, although this syncopated *jouissance* – nullifying any reading and cut off from what is excluded from the field by perception of the frame – can only be referred to in erotic terms (or at least has constantly inspired the cinema's own erotic commentary on itself). Let us say that it is the phenomenal support which, given the materials at hand (i.e. the cinema itself), helps the spectator organize the space and the progression of the representation of his relationship as subject with the chain of his discourse.

The complex process of reading a film, which has always seemed to be a delayed and duplicated reading, is, primarily, only the process of the representation operating between the two fields which form the elementary cell of the Place of Cinema. This explains the use of theatrical metaphors about the cinema as well as the profound relationship linking the cinema to the theatre: the place of a metaphorical representation, at once spatial and dramatic, of the relations of the subject to the signifier. Thus what we are here calling the suture is primarily the representation of that which, under the same heading, is now used to designate 'the relationship of the subject to the chain of its discourse':[2] a representation sliding under the signifying Sum and burdened with a lack – the lack of someone – and with an Absent One which abolishes itself so that someone representing the next link in the chain (and anticipating the next filmic segment) can come forth. Given that the key to the process of any cinematic reading is provided by the subject, which, however, does not know that its own function is at work and is being represented in the reading, then Bresson is probably the first film-maker, not so much to have put into practice, as to have posited the principle of the cinematic which prevents this function from operating out of time or in the void. *The Trial of Joan of Arc* is the first film to subject its syntax to the cinema's necessary representation of the subject's relation to its discourse.

However, it is unfortunate that Bresson has neglected his discovery, and hidden it from his own eyes, by his almost obsessive recourse, in *Au* *hasard, Balthazar*, to his favourite tricks like 'showing the effect before the cause'. Such tricks are nearly always impoverishing except when used with deliberate terrorist intentions, as they are by Lang. (Indeed it is no accident that all great creators of the cinema have had some recourse to tricks of this kind. By systematically resorting to retroactive effects of signification, they were, unwittingly, experimenting with the play of the signifier.) Unfortunately this shows that Bresson increasingly sees the 'exchange' as operating between two images (hence the irritating abandoning in *Au hasard, Balthazar* of all depth of field) whereas, as we have seen, that exchange, as the effect of the suture, takes place first and foremost between the filmic field and its echo, the imaginary field. More seriously, the signified in *Au hasard, Balthazar* – which appears only at the end of the representation – bears the cost, as it were, of a representation which cannot be resolved because suturing is impossible, the imaginary field always remaining one of absence, so that only the (dead) letter and the syntax of the meaning are perceived.

The ideal chain of a sutured discourse would be one which is articulated into figures which it is no longer appropriate to call shot/reverse-shot, but which mark the need – so that the chain can function – for an articulation of the space such that the same portion of space be represented at least twice, in the filmic field and in the imaginary field – with all the variations of angle that the obliqueness of the camera with regard to the place of the subject allows. This ideal chain consists, as it progresses, of a duplicating representation, which demands that each of the elements composing its space and presenting its actors be separated and duplicated, and twice read or evoked in a to-and-fro movement which would need describing more precisely. This is itself punctuated by the perception of the framing which plays an essential role, since any evocation of the imaginary field relies upon it: that is the filmic field and the fourth side; the field of Absence and the field of the Imaginary; the signifier of Absence and the signifying Sum; the Absent One and the character who replaces it. . . .

That the signified can truly appear only at the conclusion of that act – hence not produced by the Sum alone (paralysed so long as it is the signifier of the Absence that makes it an entity) but of the relation between the elements of the two fields made possible by its disappearance – demonstrates the symbolic signification of this representation. For just as the 'signified to the subject' seems like 'an effect of signification governed by the repetition of the signifier', itself correlative with the disappearance of the subject and its passing as a lack, so the signified, in the cinema, only appears at the end of a play of eclipses, at the end of an oscillation of the signifier, alternately representing the Absence and the artificial signifying Sum, whose subversive effect on the spectator (which Lang mastered so well), correlative with the momentary disappearance of the Absent One, is then annulled when the Absent One is replaced by someone.

Moreover it is easier to understand the role played by the Absent One in this process, since the structure of the subject is articulated in a 'flickering in eclipses, like the movement which opens and closes the number, which delivers up the lack in the form of the 1 in order to abolish it in the successor' – a comparison between the subject and zero, alternately a lack and a number, 'taking the suturing place of the Absence (of the absolute zero) which moves below the chain (of numbers) in an alternating movement of representation and exclusion'. It designates globally the objects of the image as a signifier – thus requiring that the filmic continuum be divided into units as discrete as possible. But it also designates itself as a lack – that is, to return to Jacques-Alain Miller's definition of the subject, as 'the possibility of one signifier more' announcing the next link in the chain, and anticipating the cutting up of the *énoncé* to follow – and finally vanishes when that link appears. Thus the Absent One, that frozen production of the spectator's imaginary, is the direct demand of the signifier to be represented in an *énoncé* subjected to its order, and its eclipse ensures the suturing function of the subject of the discourse.

We have here only given a rough sketch of the functioning of an ideal type of cinematic *énoncé* whose total originality lies in it being spoken from a Place which is also that of a representation of the relations of the subject-spectator to the chain of his discourse, carried out with the very elements of that *énoncé*, thus illuminating the fundamental ambiguity of the cinematic. This ambiguity stems from the capacity to produce this necessary representation, only possible with its own elements and governing their 'reading'; without it, ultimately, no reading is possible, and it becomes a duplicated speech, in which something is said to punctuate, articulate, and even eclipse what is said in the meantime, and in its process subjects it to its cinematic Place.

Having cast light on the truly *scenic* play of the cinematic signifier it now remains to examine at greater length its effects of signification.

II

In *The General* there is a scene, or rather a fragment of a scene inscribed within a single shot, which reveals the characteristics of the image as in slow motion; this is when the two armies meet on the banks of the river near the burnt bridge. A group of soldiers crosses the river, framed by the camera in high-angle long shot (but in fact, at this stage, the spectator does not yet perceive either the framing, or the distance, or the camera's position; the image is still for the spectator only a moving and animated photograph). Suddenly the enemy soldiers rise in the frame at the bottom of the image, inordinately larger than the others. The spectator takes a moment to realize, like the Poe character who sees a butterfly as large as a ship, that the soldiers have occupied a rise above the river, which was hidden by the position of the camera. Then the spectator experiences with vertiginous delight the unreal space separating the two groups; he himself is fluid, elastic, and expanding: he is at the cinema. A moment later, he retreats; he has discovered the framing. Suddenly, he senses the space he cannot see, hidden by the camera, and wonders, in retrospect, why such a framing was used. That question, although unanswered, will radically transform the spectator's mode of participation: this unreal space which a moment ago was the field of his *jouissance* has become the distance separating the camera from the protagonists who are no longer present, who no longer have the innocent 'being-there-ness' of a moment ago, but instead have a 'being-there-for-ness'. Why? In order to represent an Absent One, and to signify the absence of the character which the spectator's imagination puts in place of the camera. At the same time, or rather in the meantime, the filmic field, dilated by the spectator's reverie, has been tightened up. Its objects (the two armies, the slope, and the river) now form a signifying Sum, closed upon itself like the indivisible signification of a kind of absolute event. Yet the haunting presence of the other field and of the Absent One remains.

1 This metamorphosis of the image will now be described more systematically. In the previous example mention was made of a stage, which can be ignored from now on, in which the image was not perceived as a filmic field, but more like an animated photograph. This stage, prior to cinema, reveals nothing of its nature, but does demonstrate how, ultimately, it is only the filmic space, only the depth of its field, that are echoed by the other field, the side of the camera. It is within the trajectory of this reciprocal echo that the transition from the cinema to the cinematic, and vice versa, takes place. In a hypothetical and purely mythical period, when the cinema alone reigned, enjoyed by the spectator in a dyadic relationship, space was still a pure expanse of *jouissance*, and the spectator was offered objects literally without anything coming between them as a screen and thus prohibiting the capture of the objects. Suddenly, however, prohibition is there in the guise of the screen; its presence first puts an end to the spectator's fascination, to his capture by the unreal. Its perception represents the threshold at which the image is abolished and denounced as unreal, before then being reborn, metamorphosed by the perception of its boundaries. (It is of course a simplification to say that the spectator perceives an image, framed and delimited, since he does not perceive simultaneously the framing, the space, and the filmed object. Perception of the framing always eclipses vision of the object at the same time as it puts an end to the spectator's *jouissance* in the space.)

Instead, a vacillating image reappears, its elements (framing, space, and object) mutually eclipsing one another in a chaos out of which rise the fourth side and the phantom which the spectator's imagination casts in its place: the Absent One. The revelation of this absence is the key moment in the fate of the image, since it introduces the image into the order of the signifier, and the cinema into the order of discourse. In this metamorphosis, the filmic field, an expanse of *jouissance*, becomes the space separating the camera from the filmed objects – a space echoed by the imaginary space of the fourth side – and, similarly, the objects of the image become the presentation of the Absent One, *the* signifier of its absence. What then remains of the undefined body of the image is literally only a signifier of insignificance. Yet out of this reduction the image is reborn as a signifying Sum, the uniting of its semantic traits which are in a way summoned to signify something together, a signifying Sum always echoed by a lack (absence) which threatens to annul it by reducing it to being nothing but its signifier.

2 From these stages – which we have described only sketchily, without giving more than an approximate account of the logic of their process – can be deduced the tragic and unstable nature of the image, a totality synchronically elusive, made of structurally opposite and mutually eclipsing elements. The cinema is characterized by an antinomy of reading and *jouissance*, because the space in fact always abolishes the object, and the depth of field makes the bodies inscribed within it vanish (in Preminger and Mizoguchi); but this is only possible with an eclipse of *signifiance*[3] (and vice versa) which enables the spectator, in his daydreaming, to capture the expressive traits of the image, the unexpected movement of a body or of the camera, and the sudden dilation of space. . . . Through the oscillation of the filmic space, alternately field and sign, the image enters the order of the signifier, but only at the cost of its own reduction. The object is also in oscillation, being in fact the most volatile element of the image: it is always under threat of dissolution in the space, a shadow of itself at the moment at which the image is literally being reduced, and hidden behind its signification during the image's rebirth as signifying Sum. The oscillation of the signifier itself, alternately sign and letter frozen in its literalness only to evoke the absence of anyone, makes the cinema a unique form of speech, one which speaks itself, and sometimes speaks only of itself, whose fate rests with the Absent One; for the Absent One, whose nature is to vanish upon being named, disappears when someone, or indeed something, is introduced into its field.

This introduction alone fills the gap, erases the absence of the empty field, and sutures the cinematic discourse by enveloping it in a new dimension, the Imaginary: the fourth side, a pure field of absence, becomes the imaginary field of the film and the field of its imaginary. The cinema, which seemingly is without horizon, does in fact possess one, an imaginary horizon, on the other side. Thus the ambiguity of the field, at once present and absent, unreal and imaginary, can be called cinematic since it is through this duality that the cinema engenders itself. The suturing effect of any presence in the imaginary field shows how, in the cinema, the space and the signifier join their effects even while vanishing; indeed, as in *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, only the articulation of space supports the semantic exchange between shots, and only the relationship between the objects of the image and an imaginary field where those objects are echoed by other objects, prevents the fixing of the signifying Sum, the freezing of meaning which threatens the speech of the film with having to manifest itself for ever – and this at a time when the spectator has been subverted by it – outside the filmic field producing the Sum, and before it is reflected in the imaginary field and meets its own echo.

To make a film always means outlining a field which evokes another field, in which a finger rises to designate – by hiding them – its objects as the signifier of its insignificance, before having them reappear – and die – as a signifying Sum. This signifying Sum, echoed by the absence producing it, does not suggest a plenitude of meaning – which the camera cannot attain immediately, since it is burdened with a lack which must always be satisfied. Instead it represents a particular effect of the cinematic signifier – a real terrorism of the sign – which corresponds to the moment, opposed to the moment of literal reduction, when signification actually penetrates the spectator as a sovereign speech, solitary and without echo. Therefore, the fate of cinematic speech, abstracted from the objects conveying it, is to manifest itself alternately as a frozen letter, which signifies an absence during its advent, and as a terroristic and subversive speech. Between these two extreme phases, cinematic speech encounters an echo in the field of the imaginary which enables it to anchor itself in the field it comes from. But if the imaginary field remains the field of absence, its only echo is its futility and the anchoring cannot take place; the objects no longer carry it, the speech floats, spelt out, and it breaks as a result of being unsupported by the imaginary.

3 Up to now (except among a handful of great film-makers who understand that the absent field is as important as the present field and that the fate of the signifier is governed by their mutual articulation) the problem of the cinematic has only been raised by modern film-makers. In rejecting a space which today is still largely only one of fiction, they have put cinematic language under exemplary pressure, but at the risk of leading it to the threshold of reification. Surprisingly, in the light of *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, a similar reification affects *Au hasard, Balthazar*, a film whose failure, in our opinion, symbolizes that of any cinema which refuses to come to terms with the duality of its space and to articulate it into cinematic fields. This makes Bresson without doubt the most ambiguous figure in modern cinema. In *Au hasard, Balthazar*, a strictly linear film, in which the camera only functions as a finger pointing out the signifying objects, whether those which it follows or those which it finds in its path, Bresson seems to have wanted to question all his syntactic procedures and, at the same time, as it were, suture through movement the discourse, which as a result is inevitably strewn with blanks and gaps. The camera movements themselves prevent the spectator's imaginary from functioning and from suturing the discourse, through the absence they continually produce, an absence which is only filled in rare scenes recalling *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, such as the meeting between Gérard and Marie; as a result the discourse endlessly signifies itself as a dead letter, and its syntax emerges at every instant as the only signified of the film. There is a continually noticeable decomposition of syntagms, for instance, in the scene in which Gérard

and his acolyte load the donkey at the end of the film: after they have loaded 'the perfume, the stockings, and the gold', the camera halts on a sordid mess just as the characters leave the frame; the intention of meaning designates itself. . . .

Nevertheless, *The Trial of Joan of Arc* remains the model of the cinematic which takes on the specifically tragic nature of its language, even accentuates it, and allows the suture of a deliberately syncopated discourse. To begin with, Bresson very consciously worked on the times of the image, sometimes in order to create – as did Lang – a *fantastique* of the sign (shots of the registrar's hands and of the priest who makes a sign to Joan, so brief that ultimately they can only be perceived as insignificant signifiers, illegible messages), and sometimes in order to preserve the signs of the alteration they undergo during the literal reduction of the image: in the confrontations between Joan and her judge, the slight time lapse separating the moment of succession of the shots from the appearance – otherwise imperceptible without that delay – on Joan's face of the effects of the judge's words, the tightening of the throat, the movement of the lips, like the results of an invisible whip lash. After the syncope produced by the change of shot, after the erasing of the absence by the presence of the other character on the other side of the camera, and the reconstruction as a cinematic field, through camera position, of the scene of the confrontation between the characters, this moment allows the sign to burst at its point of greatest efficiency, following the operation of the suture.

With infinite subtlety, Bresson has outlined and almost reinvented cinematic fields. Dispelling the illusions and ambiguities of a 'subjective' cinema, he has wilfully accentuated the divergence between the camera's position and that of the character placed on the same side, thereby introducing infinite modulations of shooting angles: the characters may either be almost face-on (the judge) or in three-quarter view (Joan). The variation of this angle of attack, which results in the executioner seeming strangely more vulnerable than his victim, would, if necessary, prove the importance of the field outlined by the camera, whose obliqueness indicates the spectator's own position. That the only possible position for the camera should be that oblique angle shows that the spectator does not identify with any other character in the invisible field of the film, but occupies a position out of alignment both with the character and with the position of the Absent One which is only present in the imaginary when the character, who takes its place, is not there himself.

4 Thus the Absent One, this frozen production of the spectator's imaginary, manifests itself between two moments: one, when the cinema's speech is abolished in the spectator's cosmomorphic *jouissance*, and the other, when that speech traverses the spectator. In between these two moments the spectator recuperates his difference, an operation by which he is himself placed outside the frame, by positioning the Absent One as the subject of a vision which is not his own, and the image as the signifier of absence. Only during the intervals of such borderline moments is the

spectator's imaginary able to function freely, and hence to occupy the place – evidenced by its spatial obliqueness – of a vanishing subject, decentred from a discourse which is closing itself, and suturing itself in it, and which the subject can only assume in the Imaginary, that is at once during the interval when he disappears as subject, and when he recuperates his difference, and from a place which is neither the place where the character is positioned by the spectator's imagination – a character who is no more the spectator than he is the subject of the image as fictive image – (hence the unease produced by a shot/reverse-shot such as in *Kriemhild's Revenge,* and nearly all Lang's shots where the camera often actually occupies the place of the character in that position); nor is it an arbitrary position forcing the spectator to posit perpetually the Absent One as the fictitious subject of a vision which is not his own and on which his imagination would stop short.

In a cinema free of subjective illusion, one can imagine what scope there would be, once again, for a linking of shots by the look determined by the unique angle which would allow the suture to take place – a suture which alone would allow one to reach, beyond fiction, the point dreamed of by Bresson where each image would only have an 'exchange' value. The field of such a cinematic, not yet born, would be less the space of an event than the field of emergence of the symbolic; its symbol could be the admirable shot/reverse-shot in *La Chasse au lion à l'arc* within which Rouch frames the dying lioness and the group of hunters praying before her. In *The Trial of Joan of Arc* Bresson only allows himself to show the signs of communication, unlike Flaherty who complacently purported to recreate the event of communication itself. Bresson does so within a cinematic field which, because he does not attempt to produce the illusion of its immediacy, gives back to the cinema a symbolic dimension, revealed in the very process of reading.

5 After experimenting with its characteristics, naively at first, then more and more deliberately (as with Lang and Hitchcock), the cinema today speaks of nothing else. Yet now that these properties are recognized, we look to that speech to recreate not an object but a site, a cinematic field which will be no longer the privileged means of embodying a fiction, but for cinema's speech to unfold itself according to its properties, since it is through space that the cinema is born into the order of discourse, and it is from the place whose absence it evokes that it is designated as a speech and that its imaginary is displayed. It would be absurdly academic, however, to deduce from 'how to articulate that speech' only a more efficient way of distributing the cinema's signifier, and simply to expose a misunderstanding of its characteristics, as with *Au hasard, Balthazar.* For it is nevertheless essential to recognize that, in articulating the conditions and the limits of its signifying power, the cinema is also speaking of eroticism.

That in Bresson's masterpiece, which is about communication, and even more about eroticism (around which its tragedy explodes), he could only talk about it by creating a cinematic field which, at the same time, is the space of his own discourse recreated, and the field of speech of the cinematic, indicates clearly enough the symbolic specificity of even the most simple cinematic space, reduced to its minimal unit – an absence and a presence; that is, the staging of a 'passion' of signifiers, a *mise en scène* of bodies and of the spectator himself who is privileged to represent the passion operating in communication, and in eroticism especially. For too long eroticism in the cinema has only been exploited or located on the filmic level; people talked about the eroticism of a camera movement as improperly as they did about the camera-eye and possession of the world by the film-maker, etc. A substantial shift in point of view has in fact taken place; today the phenomenon of quasi-vision, peculiar to the cinema, only appears as the condition of an eroticism recognizable in the articulation of the filmic and the cinematic, and affecting the signifiers and the figures conveying them, thereby demonstrating that the very nature of the cinematic discourse is in question. The discovery that the cinema, in speaking itself, speaks of eroticism, and is the privileged space where eroticism can always be signified, should probably be credited to Lang; and although all the consequences are far from being drawn yet, this discovery engages the whole cinema.

Postscript

The following remarks sum up and attenuate somewhat the extremism of the article.

1 In the very process which is at the same time *jouissance* and 'reading' of the film – a 'reading' which in turn is signified and annulled, and by which the spectator is subverted – something is said which can only be discussed in erotic terms, and which is itself given as the closest representation of the actual process of eroticism.

2 Subjection of what is said in the *meantime* in the film is unavoidable for two reasons and in two ways: first the fate of the cinematic signifier is given by the articulations of the process; second, and more importantly, the process itself and all that is said in it, which takes place in a cinematic *space* making the film a *symbolic space*, always designates the seal of the symbolic, modified by its echo and modelled by its grid.

3 Thus, to say that the cinema, in speaking itself, in its place and from its specific place, speaks of eroticism, leads to questioning its symbols and figures, beyond eroticism. Indeed beyond that eroticism, the essentially *figurative* reality of the cinema is revealed in such films as *The Tiger of Bengal*, *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, or *The Immortal Story*.

Translated by Kari Hanet[4]

Notes

1 *Enoncé*: what is said in contrast to the act of saying. See Emile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics* (Coral Gables, University of Miami Press, 1977) for an account of this distinction.

2 This phrase and all subsequent phrases given in quotation marks are quotations or paraphrases from a paper by Jacques-Alain Miller, 'La Suture (éléments de la logique du signifiant)', published in *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, no. 1, 1966, and translated in *Screen*, vol. 18, no. 4, Winter 1977–8.

For a detailed contextualization and explanation of suture, see the 'Dossier on Suture' in *Screen*, vol. 18, no. 4, Winter 1977–8. It includes a translation of Jacques-Alain Miller's 'Suture, Elements of the logic of the Signifier', and Stephen Heath's 'Notes on Suture'. A revision of Heath's article appears as Chapter 3 of his *Question of Cinema* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1981). For another detailed explication and deployment of Suture, see Chapter 5 of Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1983). See especially Daniel Dayan, 'The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema', reprinted in Bill Nichols, *Movies and Methods* (I) (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976).

3 'Signifiance' is a term used by Barthes and Kristeva to describe the work or process of the signifier as production for the subject – as opposed to 'signification', which is concerned with the place of signifieds as products within a system. For a fuller definition see the introduction to R. Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, London, Fontana, 1977, and J. Kristeva, 'Signifying Practice and Mode of Production', *Edinburgh '76 Magazine*, Edinburgh Film Festival, 1976. (Translator's note.)

4 The editors of *Screen*, where this translation originally appeared, acknowledged the contribution of Henry Seggerman, whose translation and extensive notes were helpful in the preparation of the journal's dossier on Suture.

3 Jean-Louis Comolli, Jean Narboni: 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism'

('Cinéma/idéologie/critique', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 216, October 1969)

Scientific criticism has an obligation to define its field and methods. This implies awareness of its own historical and social situation, a rigorous analysis of the proposed field of study, the conditions which make the work necessary and those which make it possible, and the special function it intends to fulfil.

It is essential that we at *Cahiers du Cinéma* should now undertake just such a global analysis of our position and aims. Not that we are starting entirely from zero. Fragments of such an analysis have been coming out of material we have published recently (articles, editorials, debates, answers to readers' letters) but in an imprecise form and as if by accident. They are an indication that our readers, just as much as we ourselves, feel the need for a clear theoretical base to which to relate our critical practice and its field, taking the two to be indivisible. 'Programmes' and 'revolutionary' plans and declarations tend to become an end in themselves. This is a trap we intend to avoid. Our objective is not to reflect upon what we 'want' (would like) to do, but upon what we *are* doing and what we *can* do, and this is impossible without an analysis of the present situation.

I. Where?

(a) First, our situation. *Cahiers* is a group of people working together; one of the results of our work appearing as a magazine.[1] A magazine, that is to say a particular product, involving a particular amount of work (on the part of those who write it, those who produce it and, indeed, those who read it). We do not close our eyes to the fact that a product of this nature is situated fairly and squarely inside the economic system of capitalist publishing (modes of production, spheres of circulation, etc). In any case it is difficult to see how it could be otherwise today, unless one is led astray by Utopian ideas of working 'parallel' to the system. The first step in the latter approach is always the paradoxical one of setting up a false front, a 'neo-system' alongside the system from which one is attempting to escape, in the fond belief that it will be able to negate the system. In fact all it can do is reject it (idealist purism) and consequently it is very soon jeopardized by the enemy upon which it modelled itself.[2] This 'parallelism' works from one direction only. It touches only one side of the wound, whereas we believe that both sides have to be worked upon. And the danger of the parallels meeting all too speedily in infinity seems to us sufficient to argue that we had better stay in the finite and allow them to remain apart.

This assumed, the question is: what is our attitude to our situation? In France the majority of films, like the majority of books and magazines, are produced and distributed by the capitalist economic system and within the dominant ideology. Indeed, strictly speaking all are, whatever expedient they adopt to try and get around it. This being so, the question we have to ask is: which films, books and magazines allow the ideology a free, unhampered passage, transmit it with crystal clarity, serve as its chosen language? And which attempt to make it turn back and reflect itself, intercept it and make it visible by revealing its mechanisms, by blocking them?

(b) For the situation in which we are *acting* is the field of cinema (*Cahiers* is a film magazine),[3] and the precise object of our study is the history of a film: how it is produced, manufactured, distributed,[4] understood.

What is a film today? This is the relevant question; not, as it possibly once was: what is the cinema? We shall not be able to ask that again until a body of knowledge, of theory, has been evolved (a process to which we certainly intend to contribute) to inform what is at present an empty term, with a concept. For a film magazine the question is also: what work is to be done in the field constituted by films? And for *Cahiers* in particular: what is our specific function in this field? What is to distinguish us from other 'film magazines'?

II. The films

What is a film? On the one hand it is a particular product, manufactured within a given system of economic relations, and involving labour (which appears to the capitalist as money) to produce – a condition to which even 'independent' film-makers and the 'new cinema' are subject – assembling a certain number of workers for this purpose (even the director, whether he is Moullet or Oury, is in the last analysis only a film worker). It becomes transformed into a commodity, possessing exchange value, which is realized by the sale of tickets and contracts, and governed by the laws of the market. On the other hand, as a result of being a material product of the system, it is also an ideological product of the system, which in France means capitalism.[5]

No film-maker can, by his own individual efforts, change the economic relations governing the manufacture and distribution of his films. (It cannot be pointed out too often that even film-makers who set out to be 'revolutionary' on the level of message and form cannot effect any swift or radical change in the economic system – deform it, yes, deflect it, but not negate it or seriously upset its structure. Godard's recent statement to the effect that he wants to stop working in the 'system' takes no account of the fact that any other system is bound to be a reflection of the one he wishes to avoid. The money no longer comes from the Champs-Elysées but from London, Rome or New York. The film may not be marketed by the distribution monopolies but it is shot on film stock from another monopoly – Kodak.) Because every film is part of the economic system it is also a part of the ideological system, for 'cinema' and 'art' are branches of ideology. None can escape: somewhere, like pieces in a jigsaw, all have their own allotted place. The system is blind to its own nature, but in spite of that, indeed because of that, when all the pieces are fitted together they give a very clear picture. But this does not mean that every film-maker plays a similar role. Reactions differ.

It is the job of criticism to see where they differ, and slowly, patiently, not expecting any magical transformations to take place at the wave of a slogan, to help change the ideology which conditions them.

A few points, which we shall return to in greater detail later: *every film is political*, inasmuch as it is determined by the ideology which produces it (or within which it is produced, which stems from the same thing). The cinema is all the more thoroughly and completely determined because unlike other arts or ideological systems its very manufacture mobilizes powerful economic forces in a way that the production of literature (which becomes the commodity 'books') does not – though once we reach the level of distribution, publicity and sale, the two are in rather the same position.

Clearly, the cinema 'reproduces' reality: this is what a camera and film stock are for – so says the ideology. But the tools and techniques of film-making are a part of 'reality' themselves, and furthermore 'reality' is nothing but an expression of the prevailing ideology. Seen in this light, the classic theory of cinema that the camera is an impartial instrument which grasps, or rather is impregnated by, the world in its 'concrete reality' is an eminently reactionary one. What the camera in fact registers is the vague, unformulated, untheorized, unthought-out world of the dominant ideology. Cinema is one of the languages through which the world communicates itself to itself. They constitute its ideology for they reproduce the world as it is experienced when filtered through the ideology. (As Althusser defines it, more precisely: 'Ideologies are perceived-accepted-suffered cultural objects, which work fundamentally on men by a process they do not understand. What men express in their ideologies is not their true relation to their conditions of existence, but how they react to their conditions of existence; which presupposes a real relationship and an imaginary relationship.') So, when we set out to make a film, from the very first shot, we are encumbered by the necessity of reproducing things not as they really are but as they appear when refracted through the ideology. This includes every stage in the process of production: subjects, 'styles', forms, meanings, narrative traditions; all underline the general ideological discourse. The film is ideology presenting itself to itself, talking to itself, learning about itself. Once we realize that it is the nature of the system to turn the cinema into an instrument of ideology, we can see that the film-maker's first task is to show up the cinema's so-called 'depiction of reality'. If he can do so there is a chance that we will be able to disrupt or possibly even sever the connection between the cinema and its ideological function.

The vital distinction between films today is whether they do this or whether they do not.

(a) The first and largest category comprises those films which are imbued through and through with the dominant ideology in pure and unadulterated form, and give no indication that their makers were even aware of the fact. We are not just talking about so-called 'commercial' films. The *majority* of films in all categories are the unconscious instruments of the ideology which produces them. Whether the film is 'commercial' or 'ambitious', 'modern' or 'traditional', whether it is the type that gets shown in art houses, or in smart cinemas, whether it belongs to the 'old' cinema or the 'young' cinema, it is most likely to be a rehash of the same old ideology. For all films are commodities and therefore objects of trade, even those whose discourse is explicitly political – which is why a rigorous definition of what constitutes 'political' cinema is called for at this moment when it is being widely promoted.[6] This merging of ideology and film is reflected in the first instance by the fact that audience demand and economic response have also been reduced to one and the same thing. In direct continuity with political practice, ideological practice reformulates the social need and backs it up with a discourse. This is not a hypothesis, but a scientifically established fact. The ideology is talking to itself; it has all the answers ready before it asks the questions. Certainly there is such a thing as public demand, but 'what the public wants' means 'what the dominant ideology wants'. The notion of a public and its tastes was created by the ideology to justify and perpetuate itself. And this public can only express itself via the thought-patterns of the ideology. The whole thing is a closed circuit, endlessly repeating the same illusion.

The situation is the same at the level of artistic form. These films totally accept the established system of depicting reality: 'bourgeois realism' and the whole conservative box of tricks: blind faith in 'life', 'humanism', 'common sense', etc. A blissful ignorance that there might be something wrong with this whole concept of 'depiction' appears to have reigned at every stage in their production, so much so that to us it appears a more accurate gauge of pictures in the 'commercial' category than box-office returns. Nothing in these films jars against the ideology, or the audience's mystification by it. They are very reassuring for audiences, for there is no difference between the ideology they meet every day and the ideology on the screen. It would be a useful complementary task for film critics to look into the way the ideological system and its products merge at all levels: to study the phenomenon whereby a film being shown to an audience becomes a monologue, in which the ideology talks to itself, by examining the success of films by, for instance, Melville, Oury and Lelouch.

(b) A second category is that of films which attack their ideological assimilation on two fronts. Firstly, by direct political action, on the level of the 'signified', i.e. they deal with a directly political subject. 'Deal with' is here intended in an active sense: they do not just discuss an issue, reiterate it, paraphrase it, but use it to attack the ideology (this presupposes a theoretical activity which is the direct opposite of the ideological one). This act only becomes politically effective if it is linked with a breaking down of the traditional way of depicting reality. On the level of form, *Not Reconciled, The Edge* and *Terra em transe*[7] all challenge the concept of 'depiction' and mark a break with the tradition embodying it.

We would stress that only action on both fronts, 'signified' and 'signifiers'[8] has any hope of operating against the prevailing ideology. Economic/political and formal action have to be indissolubly wedded.

(c) There is another category in which the same double action operates, but 'against the grain'. The content is not explicitly political, but in some way becomes so through the criticism practised on it through its form.[9] To this category belong *Méditerranée, The Bellboy, Persona*. . . .[10] For *Cahiers* these films (b and c) constitute the essential in the cinema, and should be the chief subject of the magazine.

(d) Fourth case: those films, increasingly numerous today, which have an explicitly political content (Z is not the best example as its presentation of politics is unremittingly ideological from first to last; a better example would be *Le Temps de vivre*[11]) but which do not effectively criticize the ideological system in which they are embedded because they unquestioningly adopt its language and its imagery.

This makes it important for critics to examine the effectiveness of the political criticism intended by these films. Do they express, reinforce, strengthen the very thing they set out to denounce? Are they caught in the system they wish to break down . . . ? (see (a)).

(e) Five: films which seem at first sight to belong firmly within the ideology and to be completely under its sway, but which turn out to be so only in an ambiguous manner. For though they start from a non-progressive standpoint, ranging from the frankly reactionary through the conciliatory to the mildly critical, they have been worked upon, and work, in such a real way that there is a noticeable gap, a dislocation, between the starting-point and the finished product. We disregard here the inconsistent – and unimportant – sector of films in which the director makes a *conscious* use of the prevailing ideology, but leaves it absolutely straight. The films we are talking about throw up obstacles in the way of the ideology, causing it to swerve and get off course. The cinematic framework lets us see it, but also shows it up and denounces it. Looking at the framework one can see two moments in it: one holding it back within certain limits, one transgressing them. An internal criticism is taking place which cracks the film apart at the seams. If one reads the film obliquely, looking for symptoms, if one looks beyond its apparent formal coherence, one can see that it is riddled with cracks: it is splitting under an internal tension which is simply not there in an ideologically innocuous film. The ideology thus becomes subordinate to the text. It no longer has an independent existence: it is *presented* by the film. This is the case in many Hollywood films for example, which while being completely integrated in the system end up by partially dismantling the system from within. We must find out what makes it possible for a film-maker to corrode the ideology by restating it in the terms of his film: if he sees his film simply as a blow in favour of liberalism, it will be recuperated instantly by the ideology; if, on the other hand, he conceives and realizes it on the deeper level of imagery, there is a chance that it will turn out to be more disruptive. Not, of course, that he will be able to break the ideology itself, but simply its reflection in his film. (The films of Ford, Dreyer, Rossellini, for example.)

Our position with regard to this category of films is: that we have absolutely no intention of joining the current witch-hunt against them. They are the mythology of their own myths. They criticize themselves, even if no such intention is written into the script, and it is irrelevant and impertinent to do so for them. All we want to do is to show the process in action.

(f) Films of the 'living cinema' (*cinéma direct*) variety, group one (the larger of the two groups). These are films arising out of political (or, it would probably be more exact to say, social) events or reflections, but which make no clear differentiation between themselves and the non-political cinema because they do not challenge the cinema's traditional, ideologically conditioned method of 'depiction'. For instance, a miners' strike will be filmed in the same style as *Les Grandes familles*.[12] The makers of these films suffer under the primary and fundamental illusion that if they once break off the ideological filter of narrative traditions (dramaturgy, construction, domination of the component parts by a central idea, emphasis on formal beauty) reality will then yield itself up in its true form. The fact is that by doing so they only break off one filter, and not the most important one at that. For reality holds within itself no hidden kernel of self-understanding, of theory, of truth, like a stone inside a fruit. We have to manufacture those. (Marxism is very clear on this point, in its distinction between 'real' and 'perceived' objects.) Cf. *Chiefs* (Leacock) and a good number of the May films.[13]

This is why supporters of *cinéma direct* resort to the same idealist terminology to express its role and justify its successes as others use about products of the greatest artifice: 'accuracy', 'a sense of lived experience', 'flashes of intense truth', 'moments caught live', 'abolition of all sense that we are watching a film' and finally: fascination. It is that magical notion of 'seeing is understanding': ideology goes on display to prevent itself from being shown up for what it really is, contemplates itself but does not criticize itself.

(g) The other kind of 'living cinema'. Here the director is not satisfied with the idea of the camera 'seeing through appearances', but attacks the basic problem of depiction by giving an active role to the concrete stuff of his film. It then becomes productive of meaning and is not just a passive receptacle for meaning produced outside it (in the ideology): *Le Règne du jour, La Rentrée des Usines Wonder.*[14]

III. Critical function

Such, then, is the field of our critical activity: these films, within the ideology, and their different relations to it. From this precisely defined field spring four functions: (1) in the case of the films in category (a): show what they are blind to: how they are totally determined, moulded, by the ideology; (2) in the case of those in categories (b), (c) and (g): read them on two levels, showing how the films operate critically on the level of signified and signifiers; (3) in the case of those of types (d) and (f): show how the signified (political subject matter) is always weakened, rendered harmless, by the absence of technical/theoretical work on the signifiers; (4) in the case of those in group (e): point out the gap produced between film and ideology by the way the films work, and show how they work.

There can be no room in our critical practice either for speculation (commentary, interpretation, decoding even) or for tittle-tattle (of the film-columnist variety). It must be a rigidly factual analysis of what governs the production of a film (economic circumstances, ideology, demand and response) and the meanings and forms appearing in it, which are equally tangible.

The tradition of frivolous and evanescent writing on the cinema is as tenacious as it is prolific, and film analysis today is still massively predetermined by idealistic presuppositions. It wanders further abroad today, but its method is still basically empirical. It has been through a necessary stage of going back to the material elements of a film, its signifying structures, its formal organization. The first steps here were undeniably taken by André Bazin, despite the contradictions that can be picked out in his articles. Then followed the approach based on structural linguistics (in which there are two basic traps, which we fell into – phenomenological positivism and mechanistic materialism). As surely as criticism had to go through this stage, it has to go beyond. To us, the only possible line of advance seems to be to use the theoretical writing of the Russian film-makers of the 1920s (Eisenstein above all) to elaborate and apply a critical theory of the cinema, a specific method of apprehending rigorously defined objects, in direct reference to the method of dialectical materialism.

It is hardly necessary to point out that we know that the 'policy' of a magazine cannot – indeed, should not – be corrected by magic overnight. We have to do it patiently, month by month, being careful in our own field to avoid the general error of putting faith in spontaneous change, or attempting to rush in a 'revolution' without the preparation to support it. To start proclaiming at this stage that the truth has been revealed to us would be like talking about 'miracles' or 'conversion'. All we should do is to state what work is already in progress and publish articles which relate to it, either explicitly or implicitly.

We should indicate briefly how the various elements in the magazine fit into this perspective. The essential part of the work obviously takes place in the theoretical articles and the criticisms. There is coming to be less and less of a difference between the two, because it is not our concern to add up the merits and defects of current films in the interests of topicality, nor, as one humorous article put it, 'to crack up the product'. The interviews, on the other hand, and also the 'diary' columns and the list of films, with the dossiers and supplementary material for possible discussion later, are often stronger on information than theory. It is up to the reader to decide whether these pieces take up any critical stance, and if so, what.[15]

Translated by Susan Bennett

Notes

1 Others include distribution, screening and discussion of films in the provinces and the suburbs, sessions of theoretical work (see 'Montage', no. 210). (Authors' note.)

2 Or tolerated, and jeopardized by this very toleration. Is there any need to stress that it is the tried tactic of covertly repressive systems not to harass the protesting fringe? They go out of their way to take no notice of them, with the double effect of making one half of the opposition careful not to try their patience too far and the other half complacent in the knowledge that their activities are unobserved. (Authors' note.)

3 We do not intend to suggest by this that we want to erect a corporatist fence round our own field, and neglect the infinitely larger field where so much is obviously at stake politically. Simply, we are concentrating on that precise point of the spectrum of social activity in this article, in response to precise operational needs. (Authors' note.)

4 A more and more pressing problem. It would be inviting confusion to allow it to be tackled in bits and pieces and obviously we have to make a unified attempt to pose it theoretically later on. For the moment we leave it aside. (Authors' note.)

5 'Capitalist ideology.' This term expresses our meaning perfectly, but as we are going to use it without further definition in this article, we should point out that we are not under any illusion that it has some kind of 'abstract essence'. We know that it is historically and socially determined, and that it has multiple forms at any given place and time, and varies from historical period to historical period. (Authors' note.)

6 Like the whole category of 'militant' cinema, which is totally vague and

undefined at present. We must (a) rigorously define the function attributed to it, its aims, its side effects (information, arousal, critical reflection, provocation 'which always has *some* effect' . . .), and *on whom*; (b) define the exact political line governing the making and screening of these films – 'revolutionary' is too much of a blanket term to serve any useful purpose here; and (c) state whether the supporters of militant cinema are in fact proposing a line of action in which the cinema would become the poor relation, in the illusion that the less the cinematic aspect is worked on, the greater the strength and clarity of the 'militant' effect will be. This would be a way of avoiding the contradictions of 'parallel' cinema and getting embroiled in the problem of deciding whether 'underground' films should be included in the category, on the pretext that their relationship to drugs and sex, their preoccupation with form, might possibly establish new relationships between film and audience. (Authors' note.)

7 *Not Reconciled* (*Nicht versöhnt*), Jean-Marie Straub, 1965 (cf. Ch. 1 in this volume); *The Edge*, Robert Kramer, 1968; *Terra em transe*, Glauber Rocha, 1967.

8 We are not shutting our eyes to the fact that it is an oversimplification (employed here because operationally easier) to make such a sharp distinction between the two terms. This is particularly so in the case of the cinema, where the signified is more often than not a product of the permutations of the signifiers, and the sign has dominance over the meaning. (Authors' note.)

9 This is not a magical doorway out of the system of 'depiction' (which is particularly dominant in the cinema) but rather a rigorous, detailed, large-scale work on this system – what conditions make it possible, what mechanisms render it innocuous. The method is to draw attention to the system, so that it can be seen for what it is, to make it serve one's own ends, condemn itself out of its own mouth. Tactics employed may include 'turning cinematic syntax upside-down' but it cannot be just that. Any old film nowadays can upset the normal chronological order in the interests of looking vaguely 'modern'. But *The Exterminating Angel* and *The Diary of Anna Magdalena Bach* (though we would not wish to set them up as a model) are rigorously chronological without ceasing to be subversive in the way we have been describing, whereas in many a film the mixed-up time sequence simply covers up a basically naturalistic conception. In the same way, perceptual confusion (avowed intent to act on the unconscious mind, changes in the texture of the film, etc) are not sufficient in themselves to get beyond the traditional way of depicting 'reality'. To realize this, one has only to remember the unsuccessful attempts there have been of the '*lettriste*' or 'zaoum' type to give back its infinity to language by using nonsense words or new kinds of onomatopoeia. In the one and the other case only the most superficial level of language is touched. They create a new code, which operates on the level of the impossible, and has to be rejected on any other, and is therefore not in a position to transgress the normal. (Authors' note.)

10 *Méditerranée*, Jean-Daniel Pollet, 1963 (cf. Ch. 1 in this volume); *The Bellboy*, Jerry Lewis, 1960; *Persona*, Ingmar Bergman, 1966.

11 Z, Costa-Gavras, 1968; *Le Temps de vivre*, Bernard Paul, 1968.

12 *Les Grandes familles*, Denys de la Patellière, 1958.

13 I.e. films arising out of the 'events' of May 1968.

14 *Le Règne du jour*, Pierre Perrault, 1967; *La Rentrée des Usines Wonder*, collective, 1968.

15 The second part of this article appeared in *Cahiers* 217. It consisted of a detailed criticism of the review *Cinéthique*: in particular, Jean-Paul Fargier, 'The Parenthesis and the Indirect Route: An attempt at a theoretical definition of the relationship between cinema and politics', and Gérard Leblanc, 'Direction' and Marcelin Pleynet, 'The Left Front of Art – Eisenstein and the Old Young Hegelians'. These materials are translated in *Screen Reader I: Cinema/Ideology/Politics*, London, Society for Education in Film and Television, 1977. For a detailed and penetrating account of the differences between *Cahiers* and *Cinéthique* as to the interpretation and use of the Soviet cultural experience of the 1920s and of Eisenstein's writing for the formation of a French cultural programme, see Sylvia Harvey, *May '68 and Film Culture*, London, British Film Institute, 1978, especially pp. 45–86. For exposition and commentary on *Cinéthique's* project, see Thomas Elsaesser, 'French Film Culture and Critical Theory: *Cinéthique*' in *Monogram* no. 2, Summer 1971. In January 1971, *Cahiers* joined *Cinéthique* in criticizing *Positif*: see Ch. 13 in this volume.

4

Pascal Bonitzer, Jean-Louis Comolli, Serge Daney, Jean Narboni, Jean-Pierre Oudart: '*La Vie est à nous*: A militant film'

('*La Vie est à nous*, film militant', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 218, March 1970)

I. Situation of the film

I.1. Insertions

I.1.1. *La Vie est à nous* was produced by the French Communist Party (which conceived the project) for the May 1936 election campaign which was to bring the Popular Front to power. It was filmed in February and March 1936 by a crew of film-makers and technicians who were Communist militants or sympathizers (Jean-Paul Le Chanois, Pierre Unik, Jacques B. Brunius, André Zwoboda, Jacques Becker, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Alain Douarinou, Claude Renoir, Jean Isnard, Marc Maurette, etc.). The crew was supervised by Jean Renoir, who directed most of the sequences; he also worked on the film's construction and editing with Jacques B. Brunius and Marguerite Renoir. Financed by collections taken at Party meetings, the film cost about 70,000 francs – one-tenth of an average film budget at that time. The finished film was never submitted to the censors for approval, and was distributed only to Communist Party cells and meetings.

From the project stage, through the circumstances and conditions of its conception and making, to the use to which it was finally put, *La Vie est à nous* is unequivocally a propaganda film (militant film) in favour of the PCF and its positions of the moment.

The moment was one of violent political struggles and severe social and economic crises in France and Europe. Indeed between 1933 and 1936 the whole of Europe passed or risked passing into the hands of fascism. It had already happened in Germany with Hitler (1933) and in Italy with Mussolini (1922). But in Poland too there was the Colonels' Dictatorship (1935); Hungary had the conservative near-fascist government of General Gömbös, followed by that of the banker Imredy (1936) which was controlled by the Arrow Cross militia. In Austria, Dollfuss dissolved Parliament and established a dictatorship in 1933. In February 1934 the *Heimwehren* militia (which had become the official police) crushed the uprising of the Vienna socialists prior to setting the stage for the *Anschluss*. In Rumania, Prince Carol's regime, supported by the Iron Guard, became openly fascist in 1938. In Yugoslavia the national party – the only political party – had possessed exclusive political rights since 1933; in 1935, under the regency of Paul, uniformed 'syndicates' were formed on the model of the fascist guilds. In Bulgaria, the 'royal' dictatorship of King Boris and General Gheorgiev authorized a police terror against the democrats from 1934. In Greece the monarchy was re-established in 1935, and in response to strikes General Metaxas installed a dictatorship and decreed martial law. In Estonia, parliament and parties were dissolved in 1933; in Lithuania, Ulmanis took over in 1934, calling himself 'Vadonis' (*Führer*). In Portugal, Salazar began governing by the principle of the 'New State' in 1933: his corporate constitution was anti-democratic and anti-parliamentarian, nationalist and Christian. . . . In Spain, a reactionary majority came to power in 1934 and crushed the Asturian workers' movements. But – coincidentally with the making of *La Vie est à nous* – an alliance of communists and socialists won the elections (16 February 1936). On 18 July of the same year Franco's rebellion sparked off the civil war in Spain.

The democratic nations reacted feebly to the rise of fascism. The League of Nations gave up all plans for penalizing imperialist Italy, Belgium adopted a dubious position of neutrality, and Great Britain – its royal family in crisis, scarred by the social and economic consequences of the First World War, and fearful lest any support for the anti-fascists should open the way for communism – stayed prudently on the sidelines.

The situation was so serious that the USSR provisionally subordinated the struggle against capitalism to the struggle against fascism. They advanced the tactic of the 'popular front', an alliance of communists with the petit bourgeoisie; the latter had to be won away from the propaganda and temptations of fascism at all costs. For example, the secretary-general of the Comintern, Dimitrov, wrote: 'At the present time the working masses can no longer choose between bourgeois democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat; they can choose only between bourgeois democracy and fascism.' And the German Communist representative, Pieck, declared: 'If Germany attacks the national independence or the unity of any of the small countries of Europe, the war waged by the national bourgeoisie of those countries against such aggression will be a just war in which the proletariat and the communists cannot refuse to take part.' Maurice Thorez, Secretary General of the PCF, said to a meeting in Nantes (24 October 1934): 'What happens tomorrow will ensure, we believe, that *in opposition to the reactionary fascist front a popular front can be built for liberty, for labour and for peace*.'

Thus one must always bear in mind the historical urgency of the problem of rallying the middle classes to the struggle against fascism if one is seeking to give a precise account of the existence, method, general configuration and content of *La Vie est à nous* – even to account for the conditions that made it possible (to account, for example, for the many non-communist technicians who participated in the film-making).

In France, fascism was no less present and threatening. In 1934 the socialist-radical coalition was broken up by the radicals, who would not accept government control of the exchange rates. Riots broke out on 6 February 1934, led by royalist and fascist groups (Faisceau, Francisme, Croix de Feu, Solidarité Française). The government ceded power to Doumergue, who formed a government of the right with Pétain and Laval. Laval instituted a policy of deflation and was supported by the fascist leagues; the Croix de Feu increased from 60,000 members in 1933 to two million in 1935. Once in power, the right gave its encouragement or approval to the spread of fascism in Europe (rejection of the Franco-Soviet pact, support of Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia, anti-British policies) and stirred up new fascist and paramilitary movements like Doriot's Parti Populaire Français (1936) and the Comité Secret d'Action Révolutionnaire (or Cagoule), all supported by France's capitalists.

On the economic front France's export prices began to rise above those of other nations in 1933, and the only market was the French Empire. National revenue decreased by about 20 per cent, wholesale prices fell 44 per cent and retail prices 29 per cent; a deficit reappeared in the budget. Exportation of gold in great quantities occurred in 1934 and continued in 1935 as the Banque de France opposed any devaluation. The Laval government instituted a severe deflationary policy with the 'poverty decrees and laws' reducing public expenditure by 10 per cent. Between 1933 and 1937 France's recovery was of the order of 4.3 per cent, while Germany's was 100 per cent and Japan's 74.4 per cent. While all the other countries which had suffered from the crisis of 1929 were recovering, France's industrial production was stagnating at about 80 per cent of the 1928 level. There was a true economic recession, and it was a determining factor in the 1936 victory of the Popular Front.

I.1.2. After thirty-three years without commercial distribution (1936–69), *La Vie est à nous* has been released in Paris as part of a retrospective programme entitled "29-'36', which also includes Marcel Carné's *Nogent, Eldorado du dimanche* and I.-M. Daniel's *La Marche de la faim*.

I.1.3. In view of the important role Renoir played in creating this film (supervising the whole project, collaborating on the scenario, directing most of the sequences, and editing), it is traditional for French critics to include *La Vie est à nous* in Renoir's *oeuvre* – as his eighteenth film, coming between *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* and *Une Partie de campagne*.

I.1.4. If we view *La Vie est à nous* today, we must obviously not lose sight of the film's reasons for existing, and existing as a *militant film*, in 1936.

I.2. *La Vie est à nous* and the critics in 1969

Nevertheless, hardly any of the criticism that has appeared is concerned with the militant character of *La Vie est à nous* (unless it be nostalgically). Nor are the critics concerned with the film's political and propaganda intent, the basis of this intent, or how the film was able to achieve it effectively. Rather, most of the criticism curiously gives priority to exclusive study of the film-makers' methods: the critics seek to establish the respective parts played by the various collaborators, especially Renoir, examining not only his relations with the other co-directors but also the points of similarity between *La Vie est à nous* and Renoir's other films of the same period.

I.2.2. What is curious about this is that in this case the critics generally fail to do the job which they traditionally do (or attempt to do), i.e. the analysis of the film, its forms and its message, and that these same critics have suddenly set themselves tasks of archaeological and historical research into the making of the film and those who made it, work one would like to see them do more often and which they usually manage to avoid. In fact criticism has largely been content to recall the conditions in which *La Vie est à nous* was made, and to describe the film – describing it in order not to have to study it on the level of its specific functioning. They have emphasized the crew's teamwork, and among the crew members they emphasize the circle of Renoir's friends who enjoyed working together. The critics have also emphasized the identification of a number of characteristic Renoir features in the film: warmth, sympathy for the characters, lyricism, the direction of the actors, camera movements, etc. Thus on the one hand we have collective work, presented as something original, an exception even, worthy of extraordinary interest; on the other hand (and quite opposite) we have the 'style', the 'touch' of the *auteur* Renoir, which manages to leave its mark even on a 'commissioned' film. Between these two contrary extremes the real originality and specificity of the film is concealed: the fact that this is a militant film, a work of propaganda.

I.2.3. For many, then, it amounts to saying: yes, the film was made to order for the PCF, but the important thing about it is that here and there you can spot Renoir's touch; he has managed to express himself in spite of the propagandist imperatives. As if the film had been imposed on Renoir, and he had had to act towards the PCF and its politics as film-makers act towards production companies and their policies – by using tricks. Thus *La Vie est à nous* becomes a 'shameful' propaganda film, but Renoir's discourse 'saves' it from the poverty of its political discourse, rescues it from being interpreted in only one way. This serves precisely to conceal the reality of the film as a whole. The critics have written of what *seemed to justify their interest* in the film (the collective work, Renoir's genius, sentimental evocation of 'the period'), but not of the film itself.

I.2.4. The reality of the film posed two questions which the critics did not deal with. First, the question of the film as a product made in the social and historical context of 1936, using the stylistic and technical resources of that period with a certain very precise aim in view and tailoring those resources to that aim; second, the question of how you speak now about a militant film made in 1936.

I.2.5. What to deal with and how – these are two fundamental questions of criticism raised by this and every other film. Why have they been concealed in the case of *La Vie est à nous*? Probably on account of the real discomfort which the fact of militancy inspires in the critics – particularly in a film that is unashamedly propagandist. If the critics have taken refuge in anecdotal descriptions of the film-making on the one hand (interviews with the surviving film-makers, for example, but none with the *political promoters* of the film, which is odd) and on the other hand in more or less emotional impressions of the period's legendary aura (the mythology of the Popular Front, etc.), isn't this to avoid dealing with the source of the film's strength and – the cause of their discomfort – the fact that this is a propaganda film for the PCF? Similarly, the emphasis on Renoir's stylistic features serves here as mask and subterfuge.

I.2.6. One must add that the current distributors have shown the same discomfort regarding the political nature of *La Vie est à nous*, inserting it into a programme resolutely promoted as folklore, the years enclosed by the milestones ''29-'36' seen as the good old days of populism and the Popular Front. . . . *Nogent, Eldorado du dimanche* is precisely a bit of populist folklore, and *La Marche de la faim* is 'committed' in the most sentimental manner, deriving entirely from the most commonplace nineteenth-century mythology of the working class. To show *La Vie est à nous* right after these two shorts in the same programme could be an invitation to read this film in the same way – retrospectively, as folklore, as a rather old-fashioned testimony to the good old days. Thus the Popular Front tends to be the golden age of the sentimental left, as 1900 was for the sentimental right and the anarchist left.

I.2.7. Had *La Vie est à nous* simply been shown by itself, or at most with another Renoir film of the same period, this tendency to escape into retrospect and sentiment would have been considerably lessened if not precluded, and the directly political nature of *La Vie est à nous* would have appeared unequivocally; we could also have seen the differences between this and Renoir's other films.

I.3. Renoir and *La Vie est à nous*

I.3.1. The place held by *La Vie est à nous* in Renoir's *oeuvre* is double and contradictory. On the one hand, for most Renoir commentators (especially Claude Beylie, who organized the "29-'36' programme) the film is a sort of exception, an aside by the director, albeit a work of talent and humanity. One can hardly reproach Renoir, for he was not a member or believer, beyond feeling a certain humanist sympathy for the cause – by definition an attitude that is sceptical of outright political action – and he came away from the enterprise with honour. Thus *La Vie est à nous* is considered an isolated episode and explained in terms of Renoir's populist sympathies, which led him to other 'social' subjects (*Le Crime de Monsieur Lange, La Bête humaine*) and to historical-political ones (*La Marseillaise*). We must recall that Renoir was in fact considered a left-wing director on account of *Toni* and *Monsieur Lange*. This was surely a consideration to those who selected Renoir as supervisor of *La Vie est à nous*.

On the other hand, the same commentators on this exceptional film proudly discover authenticating signs of Renoir's paternity. Beylie writes: 'In this collectively conceived and realized work, is Renoir anywhere present? He certainly is. We feel his touch chiefly in the sequences that he actually directed, especially the scene in which the jobless worker (played by Julien Bertheau) breaks up with his sweetheart (Nadia Sibirskaia) in their sparsely furnished garret. The scene is filmed almost entirely in one shot – the young woman busying herself at the stove while the man furtively melts out of sight in the background. It has an undeniable emotional quality and a knowledge of depth of field which only the director of *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* had mastered. The scenes of the foreclosure and auction in the country are also characteristic of Renoir in their humour, although they were probably directed by Becker. And finally, it is exciting to see Renoir's favourite bit players turning up here and there, *as if they had turned up in the wrong film* [our emphasis], lending their faces, mannerisms, sometimes even lines we have seen or heard elsewhere. Blavette exhorts his fellow strikers, Dalban plays the unworthy seducer of pure working girls, Brunius stands at the roulette table and replays the ruined baron's gesture from *Les Bas-Fonds*, Becker stands in a line of unemployed workers and talks about Douglas Fairbanks, and so on. Are these just private jokes? Perhaps, but they save the film from didacticism and lend it, *even today* [our emphasis again], an unquestionable charm.'[1]

Here idealist criticism reveals the full extent of its prejudices and its basic methodological elements. First, analytical empiricism: incapable of conceiving a historically determined whole in terms of the complex, dynamic unity of its components, it dissects it, breaks it down into particles and sets these in relation to other particles which it selects just as arbitrarily from elsewhere. Second, there is that most tenacious 'prediction of the past'. This is a double procedure – recognition without cognition –

producing a pseudo-knowledge which consists of a superficial and possibly even erudite description, but no analysis of any specific functioning. The first element is sometimes disguised as structuralism. The second preferably takes the form of an act of absolution (fortunately, Renoir has proved since then that he was not a communist) or a witch-hunt (*La Déjeuner sur l'herbe* is a betrayal of *La Vie est à nous*). Such a facile and fruitless enterprise can only provoke sighs of relief or cries of outrage; we need not undertake it here. This is simply not the question.

I.3.2. First, to read *La Vie est à nous* we should keep in balance two lines of axis: that of the film's insertion in History, and that of its insertion in Renoir's *oeuvre*. The critics, on the contrary, have simply made use of the latter at the expense of the former.

I.3.3. If *La Vie est à nous* is indeed a group effort, a workshop product, it is nevertheless wrong to claim that it is not 'constructed' – that it is not based upon a precise and rigorous screenplay as Renoir's other films are. Beylie was wrong when he wrote that 'No scenario was worked out for *La Vie est à nous*; its episodes are linked by no other logical connection than its pro-PCF propagandist intent.' We shall see here that *La Vie est à nous* has a logical and indeed rigorous structure.

The clearest proof of this – and it negates all those studies which claim that *La Vie est à nous* is a film with no scenario or structure – is to compare the film's narrative as it unfolds with the report by Maurice Thorez to the Eighth Congress of the French Communist Party at Villeurbanne (22–25 January 1936 – not long before the film started shooting). Thorez's report, entitled 'The Union of the French Nation', which incidentally furnished the major part of the schoolteacher's lines at the beginning of the film, is articulated as follows:

France's resources: (a) Agriculture. (b) Industry. (c) Lines of communication and means of transport. (d) The population.

The economic crisis: Thorez establishes that in spite of its natural resources France is in the middle of a serious economic crisis – statistics are cited at this point, leading up to the question: *But how can this be? How can a country so rich have unemployment, want, poverty*? The answer:

On account of *'The Two Hundred Families'*. Thorez then enumerates the following:

Situation of the working classes: (a) The working class. (b) Functionaries and civil service employees. (c) The middle classes.

The crisis in agriculture: the suffering in the villages.

Consequences of this crisis.

Laval's war politics (outline of the international situation and the rise of fascism, Laval as an accomplice of Mussolini).

The reactionary offensive in France.

The French Communist Party's plan for recovery, followed by sections on:

Unifying the French people; the Communists in power; the struggle for unity; the United Front of the working class; the Popular Front; the Party.

It is thus incontestable that Thorez's report (which is a model of the political discourse of the time) furnished the major articulations and the sequential order for *La Vie est à nous*. We also know from Jacques B. Brunius, who worked on the editing of the first two reels of *La Vie est à nous*, that his work with Renoir consisted first in finding shots illustrating Thorez's text and then creating a dynamic articulation between images, commentary and dialogue.[2]

The film also undergoes an important permutation with regard to Thorez's report, for various reasons. Thorez goes from an outline of the situation of the working classes (the classes addressed by both the report and the film) to the international situation and the rise of fascism in France. The film, however, inverts this order, so that the three fictional episodes (the factory workers' problem; the peasants' problem; and the episode about the unemployed engineer) lead up to the political leaders' speeches, which constitute the film's real positivity. In the course of this article, we shall explain the need for such a strategy, and for the collision (in the film) between the intended recipients of the message (especially the recipients typified by the engineer) and the speakers.

I.3.4. This was not the first or last time Renoir made films collectively, in a workshop. One could even say he always worked this way, in view of the importance of his collaborators Karl Koch (who had worked with Brecht) and André Zwoboda. Consider the filmographies and interviews relating to *La Petite Marchande d'Allumettes* and *La Règle du jeu*, to say nothing of *Toni*, *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*, *Les Bas-Fonds* and *La Marseillaise*. We can also refer to statements in which Renoir himself has defined the director's role as gathering and assimilating all the advice, collaboration and contributions of others. All Renoir's films were created by a group; so was *La Vie est à nous*, but more obviously so. But the fact that certain scenes in this film were directed by Becker or Le Chanois has neither more nor less importance than the fact that all the shots of the rabbit-shooting sequence of *La Règle du jeu* were filmed by Zwoboda.

I.3.5. What the critics should have remarked about this teamwork in *La Vie est à nous* is that there is a similarity and consistency between teamwork as Renoir has always practised it and the work specifically required by a militant film.

I.3.6. Another striking conjunction is revealed if we examine the film's principles of construction and compare them with Renoir's customary narrative principles.

La Vie est à nous proceeds in the manner of a political discourse: first, an overall survey of the situation in France is presented (the schoolteacher's lesson); this picture is denounced as false, because incomplete; the responsible parties are mentioned ('the two hundred families'), as are the very real threat of fascism in France and its rise in Europe generally; the PCF is presented as the only answer to this situation; this is then demonstrated through various examples of the actual work accomplished by communist militants, which at the same time describe the true situation in France (the film has a double function, documentary and didactic). These 'examples' substantiate the speeches made by the communist leaders, prepare the way for them, give them context. The construction and articulations of this political discourse can only be the result of a specifically political approach to the job of constructing the film. We have discussed this above; and it is a matter of record that this political work was done by those crew members who were communist militants, Le Chanois and Unik.

But in approaching this political discourse and its logic, Renoir's role cannot simply have been to add his 'touch' to the crude sketch, using his talent merely to illustrate it with picturesque or dramatic embellishments in his own style.

In fact *La Vie est à nous* develops, in a filmic sense this time, not its scripted base but its founding discourse, by means of broad sections, autonomous sequences, narrative or documentary blocks apparently independent of each other. This type of construction and progression – which in *La Vie est à nous* corresponds perfectly to the logic and requirements of political discourse – also belongs on the whole to Renoir's other films of this period (*La Marseillaise* for example), which are conceived as entities composed of autonomous blocks which are nevertheless connected so that ultimately the individual sections respond to and mutually amplify one another, from one point in the film to the next. One could say that Renoir, having made *Madame Bovary*, *Toni* and *Monsieur Lange*, was able to progress smoothly to the problems of constructing a militant film. Thus, while *La Vie est à nous* may be radically different from Renoir's other films in its nature and conception, it *functions* more or less as they do. For example, Renoir's preference for alternating strong scenes with less powerful ones, his dialectical principle of balance, the controlled relationships in which the various dramatic elements either strengthen or weaken one another, apply in this instance *almost naturally* to the dialectical progression of a political discourse. And Renoir's principle of dividing his film into large units, each one generating the next, perfectly matches his didactic concern with breaking down the political material into complementary, mutually illuminating shots.

This conjunction between a true didactic work by politically militant individuals who considered *how* to order and develop their political discourse, and a dramaturgical work involving the same principles of progression and construction, indicates that Renoir's role in *La Vie est à nous* was not to beautify, enrich or vary the political discourse (and thereby blur it), but to *materialize* it, in other words to articulate a logical schema in dramatic terms. The film's dramatic progression is what propagates its political message. Renoir in no sense embellished a political signified, any more than he slipped himself in furtively, so to speak, to compensate any lack of consistency. The whole of the work was brought to bear precisely *upon* that signified.

I.3.7. We must suppose, then, that Renoir was completely involved in the collective undertaking; at the same time, as a film-maker, he took the propaganda as his raw material, inasmuch as the undertaking must have had an aspect of 'play' and manipulation – in the strong sense of the words – for Renoir, more than for the militants involved in the film-making. Renoir has always had a taste for experimentation; with a logical progression that would be worth looking at, he has tried to treat all kinds of material and theme. It was natural that at that time he would take propaganda as his material and tackle the problems of militant film-making. At a specific moment – which was the overdetermined moment of the year 1936 – Renoir was to experiment with the propaganda film, as he had experimented with 'neo-realism', the *commedia dell'arte*, shooting with multiple cameras, the long shot or depth of field, and he confronted the question that has proved fatal to many film-makers – how to propagate a single meaning in a film. This raises the problem of how *La Vie est à nous* functions as a militant film.

II. Functioning

II.1. Forms of the militant film in 1932

II.1.1. There are two modes to the political discourse of *La Vie est à nous*. First the general, the schema which subtends and gives impetus to the film: the pattern of the historical-social configuration of that moment, reflected in the communist thesis as a crisis, and the presentation of the French Communist Party as the agent of the resolution of the crisis. Second, the specification or particularization of this general discourse in a series of exemplary scenes.

The articulation of these two modes, which is what organizes *La Vie est à nous* as a political discourse, ensures that it both fulfils exactly the condition of all militant film – propagating a single political signified, a univocal message – but avoids an effect generally fatal to the militant film, that of being no more than the transparent enunciation of a single political signified. This is the stumbling block for all 'committed' discourse which does not think through its expository process. *La Vie est à nous* escapes this fate precisely because the articulation of the two modes provokes a complex reading of the single political signified. Instead of being merely its *énoncé*, the film reflects the conditions of its *énonciation*; it poses the question, not of its meaning (which is given – single and unchangeable – at the beginning of the film), but of its 'effects of meaning' – that is, the interference of the question of the recipient of the message in the filmic process of production of meaning.

This seems to be the basic problematic of the militant film, and *La Vie est à nous* poses and explores it. Not only what is said and in what way, but *to whom* it is being said.

II.1.2. Militant film operates primarily with the contemporary material: social, economic and ideological data; political situations and relations; concrete, current events and conflicts. This complex material can be treated in film in two ways. The first method uses film documents that either preexist or are filmed on the spot – documentary footage or reportage – ordered and given political significance by editing and commentary. The second method 'stages' these events, conflicts, etc., reconstituting them fictionally. In sum, the militant film either begins with filmed matter already generated by the event or political situation in question, or reconstructs and represents the situation, setting it 'in play'.

These two major paths of the militant film (laid down by the two major historical categories of the cinema – Méliès and Lumière) had both been explored before Renoir and before 1936. The first (montage of documentary footage) was essentially explored by Vertov (and not Eisenstein, who never filmed any strictly contemporary subjects except in *The General Line*). The second (using fiction and representation for political analysis) was explored by Brecht and Dudow in *Kuhle Wampe*, which played in Paris in October 1932 at the Falguière cinema.

We do not know whether Renoir saw *Kuhle Wampe* (though he knew Brecht's work, if only through working with Karl Koch), but it is a fact that Renoir's originality in *La Vie est à nous* (the result of collective reflection) consists in integrating – *dialectically* – these two existing cinematic approaches.

II.1.3. The specificity of *La Vie est à nous* as a militant film with a dual unity – cinematic and political – consists in the joint use of 'documentary' and 'fictional' material.

II.1.4. Of course, the field in which this operation takes place is the French cinema of the time, and that of Renoir; and so *La Vie est à nous* inevitably displays some characteristic, typical and stereotypical signs of that cinema, in its acting, lighting, etc.

But often these signs – read as conveniences or conventions – have masked both this film's relation to the history of militant film (including Soviet cinema and Brecht, among others) and its originality in using documentary and fiction together.

II.2. The documentary/fiction relations in *La Vie est à nous*

II.2.1. In establishing the respective distribution of documentary elements and fictional scenes in *La Vie est à nous*, we can identify two major documentary groupings. At the beginning there is the survey of France, the data on 'the two hundred families', and the newsreel footage on the rise of fascism in France and Europe. At the end of the film there is the final reprise of the survey of France's resources. Between these two 'documentary' blocks come three fictional episodes: the factory work stoppage, the auction, and the out of work engineer.

But in analysing the relations between these blocks – the structure of the film – in terms of the movement and connections among parts and sequences, we see that, although *La Vie est à nous* uses documentary elements and fictional scenes together, it is impossible to assign a closure, a particular place, an exclusive function to either. They cannot be mechanically opposed, the documentary shots as guarantees of 'reality' and the fiction as the signs of cinema. On the contrary, there are a whole series of transitions, exchanges and overlaps, so that film and work are not *divided up* between the documentary and the fiction; rather they transform each other, exchange roles and do the work of the film together. Such a dialectical relationship can only come from an exact consciousness of both the fictional character of documentary film (a fictive-becoming-real) and the documentary character of fiction (informative-exemplary-demonstrative).

II.2.2. The beginning of *La Vie est à nous* furnishes a very full example of this series of transitions which constitute a chain of dynamic exchanges between the film's elements.

The film begins with a montage of documentary shots with voice-over commentary (the speaker is not shown) detailing 'France's wealth'. The voice-over aspect is of great importance: the spectator sees a series of images, hears a commentary, and (in the absence of the speaker's image) cannot separate the two clearly. The spectator absorbs them as a block, and ratifies their *de facto* relation as legitimate, logical and pertinent. Even if the assertive tone of the commentary surprises us at this point and in this film, and makes us wonder a bit anxiously 'what's coming next', we are still unable to separate the images from the text, and we respond to them as we would to any documentary. At the very beginning of the film, we have the simple discourse of the classic documentary.

Then comes a close-up (in indeterminate location) of the actor Dasté; this shot continues the commentary on screen, introduces the speaker, and thus provokes a *visible dislocation* between the series of images we have just seen and the speech which commented upon them. (*The speech* no longer belongs to *the images, but to Dasté*; yet they are not necessarily his images.) Thus the *fiction of a speaking character* arises from an essentially documentary sequence.

Another more general shot then shows us a classroom. (Contrary to the impression of certain critics, the room is not presented from the outset as poor and dirty, but rather as a symbolic, typical schoolroom.) This shot introduces those to whom Dasté is speaking, the pupils, and designates the character played by Dasté (indeterminate in the preceding shot) as the schoolteacher. This triggers a second, very important dislocation – a second break, coming after the separation of image and commentary spoken by a character and not by the film. This commentary is no longer addressed directly to the viewers (as in the first phase, where the images/commentary whole could only be addressed to the viewers, or as in the second phase, where Dasté's spoken commentary could also only be addressing the viewers), but to characters in a fiction – the pupils. These fictional characters become the primary and privileged audience of the schoolmaster, and literally take the place that was held by the viewer, representing him in the fiction. This break in turn denotes the initial commentary as a schoolmaster's lesson to his pupils; this removes the initial images' documentary force and relegates them to the level of illustrations in a lesson. The images are completely relativized, the more so as no film is shown being projected to the pupils, and the viewers retrospectively ascribe the initial montage of images to the pupils rather than, as at first, to themselves. The images/commentary whole has become a fictional (fictive) discourse and is henceforth perceived as a particular, institutionalized and closed body of knowledge (belonging to the school), imposed upon children (even if we immediately perceive some doubt – confirmed at the end of this scene – in the teacher's own opinion of the truthfulness of his discourse).

Only later does the film, pursuing its dialectical movement, oblige us to review (radically) the successive readings of this sequence and of the images/commentary whole. We move outside the classroom after the lesson and we understand from the children's commentary – which responds to the initial commentary that became that of a schoolmaster – that these images, originally presented to us as documentary, hence equivalent to the real, are themselves divergent, lying, ideological; they give a fictive and fictionalized image of France, a political fiction that is belied by the slums now revealed in which the fiction is anchored.

At this point we need to be precise; our demonstration will gain in rigour, and the film's real complexity will be more visible as a result. When we talk of a discourse as 'lying', we do not mean that what it utters is false (for France is rich and the statistics are accurate – they come from the report to Thorez mentioned above), but rather that it lies by omission, concealment and abbreviation. The discourse produces a mystificatory *condensation* between an assertion (this *is so*) and an offering (this *is yours*). The schoolteacher himself, though obviously progressive, cannot contradict his own lesson except by means of sympathetic reservation. But the lesson begins to be *structurally* subverted by the successive discrepancies in the scene, by the gradual revelation of the fantastic dislocation between what exists in reality and what each person may have of it. Finally, another lesson – the remainder of the report, the complete demonstration – brings out the unsaid, the silences, and the censorings with which the first 'lesson' props up its fine objectivity. This counter-lesson is called 'Life is Ours' (*La Vie est à nous*).

Through a series of disconnections successively introducing the speaker, his listeners, and the listeners commenting upon the speaker (becoming speakers), the images/text whole has progressively changed from the status of a raw document (with the connotation that it is an authentic block of meaning, beyond discussion) to that of a schoolmaster's discourse (connoting a particular, traditional, dead body of knowledge), then to the status of ideological, propagandist discourse (with lying, caricatural connotations): the last transformation is radically displaced in relation to the implications of the first reading.

II.2.3. The final scenes take up certain of the 'documentary' shots again. Inversely – contrary to the initial series of disconnections implying an increasing critical distance from the commentary – the final scenes produce a *reinscription* in the documentary mode of elements previously given as fictional. The images of France's riches which appeared earlier, in the opening sequence, are now punctuated by the faces of characters who have appeared in the fictional episodes in the course of the film (workers, peasants, militant communists). The alternating montage of documentary shots of France (which, it will be remembered, were finally read as bourgeois imposture and propaganda) and the communists' faces abolishes the ideological distance between the documentary images and the fictional characters – and establishes between them a relationship of both property (appropriation, following the spoliation in the introductory scenes) and causality (these French resources which were taken from you are yours – *you produce them*).

Thus all the dialectical work on the film's meaning is produced by means of the documentary/fiction relations between the film's first and last scenes. The movement of the film takes up again what it first rejected, because its own course has produced it.

II.2.4. These two mirroring sequences demonstrate the complexity of the relation between documentary and fiction in *La Vie est à nous*. First, the introduction of the fiction causes a disconnection in the documentary, subverts it and denounces it as a lure; then, the fiction (through the intermediary device of recalling the faces of the fictional characters, except that this duplication of the fiction itself now has a documentary value) reinvests the documentary shots (still bearing a fictive connotation) and gives them a documentary value once again. They are no longer the signs of an ideological fiction, but elements of a genuine political discourse, which *bars* the initial discourse of bourgeois propaganda; that is, crosses it out and controls it.

II.2.5. Thus *La Vie est à nous* is a propaganda film which begins with the denunciation of a propaganda film. This assures us first that the film has indeed posed the question of its nature and place, of the modes and goal of its discourse; and second that it is explicitly based on the Leninist principle that bourgeois knowledge cannot be ignored or denied but is to be criticized, deconstructed and turned against the bourgeoisie. *La Vie est à nous* bases itself at the outset upon a pre-existing and dominant knowledge (that of bourgeois ideology), then deconstructs it, and delivers its militant message as a new and surer knowledge. Beginning by exposing the lies of bourgeois propaganda, the film authenticates its own propaganda.

In fact, the film not only reflects one message in order to produce and impose another, it also from the outset challenges one form in order to select and produce another. Thus from its first scenes *La Vie est à nous* poses the problem of its form as well as of its discourse. A problem which most militant films cannot or will not face.

II.2.6. We shall simply indicate a few other examples of the complexity of the relations between documentary and fiction in *La Vie est à nous*.

- Besides an exemplary-political function (to show the reality of the communists' work), the fictional scenes also have an informative and documentary function: this is the reality of France in 1936, in the factories, on the farms, in the towns. These are the real relations between individuals and between classes. They thus take on precisely that documentary function which the documentary footage at the beginning could not discharge.
- The speeches by Party leaders are documentary, certainly, seeing that the speakers play their own parts. But they were spoken and shot especially for the film – in a studio with no audience but the film crew, which was *functionally analogical* to the audience. The audience is inscribed in the editing, in the reverse-angle shots that punctuate the speeches, showing listeners who include the 'characters' from the three preceding fictional episodes. The film – the fiction – is thus opened to the *reality* of the Party.

II.2.7. So this general documentary/fiction dialectic does not mean that – because their relations are complex, their boundaries in flux, their functions reversible and complementary – documentary and fiction actually have the same meaning or importance in the film. The two are not equal, either quantitatively or qualitatively. The preceding examples show, on the contrary, that the documentary element – so long as fiction (which here includes the film's subversive and trick effects, like the sound of barking over a speech by Hitler, or the repetitive editing which caricatures de la Rocque) has not turned it around and reformulated it – remains tied to the lies and propaganda of bourgeois ideology. This was indeed necessarily the case in 1936, when newsreels, documentaries and reportage were the privileged vehicle of the dominant ideology, as television may be today. If the communist leaders' speeches – incontestably documentary – were fabricated in the studio, was this not because fictional methods seemed to the film-makers, at that time, surer than documentary methods? And it falls to fiction to criticize the documentary, produce the political argumentation, and convey the militant message. But in order to fulfil this triple function, the fiction had to present itself as the evolution of the documentary itself – as the resolution of the contradiction between the documentary's authenticity and its ideological use. Fiction here is the work of production and transformation which, precisely, converts the images of France's wealth from the status of images to that of wealth.

III. Political Effectiveness

III.1. The third fictional episode

III.1.1. *La Vie est à nous*, as we have seen, is ordered around three fictional episodes: the factory work stoppage, the auction on the farm, and the episode in which the unemployed engineer, played by Julien Bertheau, joins the Communist Party. The three episodes are linked by the device of three letters addressed to Marcel Cachin, which he opens in his office at *L'Humanité*.[3] The three fictions are aimed at the three social classes addressed by the Party's propaganda: the working class; the peasants; and intellectuals, the petit bourgeoisie, and the middle strata.

Now there is an evident divergence, on all levels, between the first two episodes and the third. The factory work stoppage and the auction on the farm show communist militants (played by Blavette and Modot) *in action among their own class*, on their own territory – the 'base' being linked to the 'top' by the metaphorical short-cut, the letters. The narrative is thus simply concrete exposition – the description – of the effectiveness of their action (which consists at the same time of resolving a concrete problem and convincing the undecided in their midst), the value of their methods; it closes with the demonstration of this effectiveness, their victory. The developments, variations and elements of suspense in these episodes are in a way solely confined to the action of a single demonstration.

III.1.2. The episode of the engineer is handled quite differently. First, this episode is developed in greater detail than the first two. It is itself made up of a series of smaller narratives, like beads on a string (the separation, his poverty, the garage, the fascist, the man's distress, meeting the communists, and the 'rise to class consciousness'), successive events which are not completely predictable. This string of fictional events, being sequential and cohesive, obeys the (arbitrary) will of narrative, which precisely makes one thing happen after another, rather than something else. As an inexorable series of violent narrative 'twists', this episode is related to traditional dramatic narrative norms. More than the first two episodes, the 'adventure' of the jobless engineer unfolds as typical cinematic fiction (typical moreover of the film aesthetics of the period). We have here a completely constituted fiction that employs reversals, false expectations, surprise effects, false trails and finally concludes with an extra narrative twist, a fictional *accident* (the meeting with the communists, which could just as well *not* have happened). We are a long way from the demonstrative principle of the first two fictions.

III.1.3. By its arbitrary, chance and non-demonstrative character, the engineer's adventure not only contrasts strongly with the worker and peasant stories, but also appears not to issue from the same concern for militant effectiveness. The communists' action in the third episode is not a function of a concrete social situation, a conflict to be resolved, a strategy to be employed. Rather, it intervenes in the general and ambiguous mode of the 'encounter', of a lucky chance – of arbitrary fiction. And what the communists do is also very different from their work in the earlier episodes. They need not join battle, nor use craft this time. They need only be in the right place at the right time in order to take in the unfortunate engineer and feed and help him, like the agents of fate in melodrama or the providential characters of a particular narrative tradition.

The play of these differences, which are immediately perceived as conventions in a conventional fiction, poses the question of this episode's militant effectiveness. Since it is not a demonstration but a pure adventure story, since it does not convey one continuous and homogeneous meaning but a series of inconsequential 'floating' signifieds which are held together only by the fact of narrative, does this episode not run the risk of provoking a doubtful and even ironic reading, instead of proving its point persuasively? Such a reading would derive not only from the exceptional chain of circumstances that lead the jobless man to the Communist Party, but also from certain stylistic details in the episode itself: Bertheau's visionary acting, the expressionistic lighting, the rapturous close-ups. Certainly today (and we mean today, not in the conjuncture of 1936) such a reading is possible; the engineer's episode can be irritating and can seem to introduce a weak link in the effectiveness of the film's militant discourse, replacing demonstration and analysis with a rhetoric of 'conversion', 'providence', 'grace', and the simple virtues of any political slogan (e.g. the choral singers who close the episode).

And yet this apparent weakness in the political cohesiveness of *La Vie est à nous*, through which various idealist themes and figures (the fall, chance, rescue, enlightenment) seem to rush in and out, is precisely the area of the film's most militant aim.

III.2. Recognition and class consciousness

III.2.1. The first two fictional episodes, as we have seen, show Party members at work, in more or less everyday circumstances, while the engineer's episode does not show militant action, but the evolution of one character who passes from one state of consciousness to another – to the necessity of joining the Party. In the earlier episodes, it was the task of Party members to represent their political work and persuade us; in the third episode this work of persuasion is accomplished in, and for, a non-communist.

III.2.2. In the three fictions, the reception of the film itself is metaphorically represented, but in very different ways, depending on the degree of political awareness of the characters – receivers, and above all depending on which class they belong to. To begin with, the characters played by Blavette and (especially) Modot have nothing new to learn about 'the two hundred families' or the fascist peril. If they write to Cachin and receive encouragement and orders from the Party, it is because they are already consciously engaged in the struggle, right where they are. *La Vie est à nous* is not just for them: the film does not address itself exclusively to militants, nor even to followers of the Party who are bound to *recognize* themselves in the film and its characters.

III.2.3. In 1936, in an electoral situation, the Communist Party had to win votes if it was to have a majority influence among the opposition. A precise goal; it precisely identifies the privileged addressees of the film.

The votes to be gained were those of the undecided, the sympathizers, whoever might be *swung over* to the Party. *And the engineer's joining is indeed shown as a sudden, unpremeditated swing.*

Like the Communist Party itself – the party of the oppressed classes dealt with in the first two episodes – *La Vie est à nous* is addressed above all to the middle classes at this particular historical moment, to the portion of the petit bourgeoisie which might support the proletarian position. Thus the third episode, coming after the worker and peasant episodes, dramatizes precisely a typical member of this petit bourgeoisie and his fate at that time. This lower middle class, represented by the character played by Bertheau, is also the main addressee of the film's political discourse, and of *this episode, which represents it.* The character played by Bertheau is the model of the viewer most clearly aimed at by the film.

III.2.4. Thus it is not a question of confirming militants in their conviction, but of recounting how these convictions can be acquired – how a person passes from vague awareness to class consciousness, from a state of drifting to an objective, politically engaged position. It is this passage which is problematical.

For the engineer must be put through an itinerary which the working-class and peasant militants of the first two episodes have already covered – or rather, which they never had to cover, for their membership of the Party has been the logical consequence of their class situation (and logically has simply been stated as given, not dramatized). For the engineer, on the other hand, the passage to communism necessarily means being *torn* from his class. This tearing away cannot take place in the mode of recognition, in all senses of the word, as it does in the first two episodes (communists recognize themselves in it automatically; the undecided non-communist workers and peasants recognize the services rendered to them). It has to take place in the far more difficult and ambiguous mode of *a raising of consciousness*.

The engineer is primarily defined by a situation of radical lack, whose real instance (the lack of work) is overlaid and overdetermined by specifically petit-bourgeois lacks (for which the lace wrap of his fiancée is the signifier). For him, becoming a member of the party of the working class can only be the end of a path along which the various petit-bourgeois lacks, felt in the mode of defective consciousness, self-consciousness (the man's shame in front of the garage owner, for example), are levelled out by the ultimate emergence of the real lack, in the form of pure and simple hunger, when all connections are severed. At this point, only the Other can intervene – in the form of either death or *rescue* by the Party. What is involved therefore is an itinerary – the itinerary of a subject – and of the transformation of the subject (of self-awareness) within the social collective ('Comrade, you are not alone').

The film's *triple stratification* (what is spoken of, to whom, and how) at the level of the subject thus finds its point of maximum consistency and condensation with the *resolution* of the engineer's episode. Implicit in this resolution is the passage

- from lacking to having
- from a desire to a satisfaction
- from an effect to a cause.

Thus, if this resolution coincided with the end of the film, the film would be blocked at the *imaginary satisfaction of a real demand* (that of the petit-bourgeois spectator whose social and political situation is analogous to the engineer's), implying a 'phantasmic' and in any case idealist closure for the film (in the manner of Rossellini or McCarey). But the resolution (and the *deficit* in the film at this point corresponds to a decisive swing) is immediately reversed in the linkage of the discourses of communist leaders like Vaillant-Couturier, Duclos, Thorez, etc.

In other words, the resolution as a solution assumed and accepted (necessarily assumed) by the addressee becomes in the film the *productive* contribution, symbolized and inscribed by the series of discourses as guarantees of the real, articulating the film to the political practice which determines and drives it.

IV. Problems of the militant film

Our only intention in what we have said above has been to note several problems in regard to *La Vie est à nous* (problems already posed by the film itself) which the would-be militant film today may have to take into account: the means required to convey a thesis; the means of increasing its yield by reflecting upon its modes of exposition; finally, and not least, the problem of the intended addressee.

We believe that the majority of would-be militant films today not only fail to confront the first problems mentioned but are also very often unequal to the last because they do not pose, in their making, the problem of the addressee. In overlooking this, these films – precisely because their makers claim they are addressing the mass (an ideologically confused notion obscuring the concept of class) or the masses (meaning classes allied in the same class struggle – which presumes that quite a bit of political work has already been acccomplished) – are still aimed at an *audience* (though it may be a small one), meaning a motley collection of individuals, by definition incapable of any real action.

These films then require – and remain confined in – a well-known type of reading that is not specified by their precise function but is reduced to an analysis of either the film's mode of activity 'in itself' (shock effects, appeal to sentiment, mechanism of fascination – indeed, controlled frustration) or of 'audience' reactions in psychological and psychoanalytical terms, which are legitimate but insufficient (identification, transference, sublimation, etc.)

This is not the case with *La Vie est à nous*, as we have shown, for this film includes in its own process the question of its addressee, specified in the indispensable basis of the conjunction class situation/class position. We have seen how, in the first two fictional episodes (and of course more precisely in the workers' than in the peasants' episode), all the narrative processes contributed to the presentation of individuals who were defined by their proletarian class being, their class interest, and who were endowed with a class instinct; it was merely a matter of helping them shed the fears, myths, illusions and prejudices inculcated by the ruling class, in order to *confirm* them in their class situation and lead them gradually to adopt a necessarily corresponding position.

And we have seen, in the contrary case of the engineer, that the anticipated ends necessitated other *cinematic* means. This individual being defined by a petit-bourgeois class position (whose class interest, by definition and according to circumstances, wavers between bourgeois and proletarian interests), we have seen too how a mere ideological polishing proved inadequate (except to touch off the infinite round of ineffectual political consciousness, the alternation between dramatic lucidity and blindness in Sartre and Politzer); and we have seen that a break was required, a rupture from one's class situation as a prerequisite of taking up any new position.

We are not here resurrecting the dangerous conjunction proletarian art/bourgeois art. We have sought only to pose (and don't pretend to have solved) the problem of the effect of recognition which the militant film tends to raise, and to sketch out the central and vital problem of *the effect anticipated and obtained from this effect of recognition*. To be continued, then.

Translated by Randall Conrad

Notes

1. Claude Beylie, *Jean Renoir, Films 1924–1939,* Paris, L'Avant-Scène du Cinéma, 1969, p. 26. (Translator's note.)
2. See Jacques B. Brunius, *En marge du cinéma français,* Paris, Arcanes, 1954, pp. 131–2. (Translator's note.)
3. *L'Humanité:* French Communist Party newspaper, of which Marcel Cachin was then the editor.

5 Jean-Pierre Oudart, Jean Narboni, Jean-Louis Comolli: 'Readings of Jancsó: Yesterday and Today'

('Lectures de Jancsó: hier et aujourd'hui', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 219, April 1970)

Jean-Pierre Oudart: 'The Place'

Contemporary 'readings' of cinema (Marxist, psychoanalytic, or otherwise) tend to obscure something which should not, however, seem so shocking. Namely, that what we call its *écriture*[1] has almost always had (and still has) the function of producing an object of aesthetic pleasure which should, perhaps, be analysed first as a means to this end (such an analysis would imply a knowledge of what produces aesthetic pleasure, how, and for whom).

This point of view is not in the least reductionist; perhaps it is even the only one for film analysis to take if it is to overlook as little as possible.

A film, like a painting, is almost always made *not* to be read, and this should be more clearly admitted by readers of film who are often in too much of a hurry; the fact that the means used to ensure this sometimes constitute the major, most intelligent and most beautiful part of a film's work ought not to be hushed up, since we do not have the choice today between an aesthetic cinema and any other kind.

We must try not to take our desires (dead or alive) for realities. We must not, today, rush at the cinematic object without the greatest self-suspicion. A passion for reading has replaced the passion to enjoy and is just as symptomatic, and we know that one of the subtlest forms of resistance to analysis is the Freudian interpretation of the analytic material by the analysand, scorning his own causes and wishing to be seen as the analyst.

All readers should be required to see into their own causes, and into the reasons (when these are not the reason, or the cause) by which they are ensnared.

For in cinema today it is probable that all schools of reading – even and perhaps above all those which claim to be the most transgressive (those which hypostatize, not the meaning any more, nor the *jouissance*, but the scriptural work and the signifying production of the text) – also conceal the phantasmic representations for which the cinema acts as a screen; and they probably also show that, while films today are not so obviously conceived as objects of *jouissance* as they once were, the way they are received is nevertheless still a function of the persistent image we have of the aesthetic object as

1 an object destined to and capable of providing a certain pleasure;
2 an object to be envisaged synthetically, as a reduced model of thought, or a model of reduced and reductionist thought.

That the function of films in the eyes of their reader is to allow him to produce a more or less coherent representation of his own thinking in the form of the reduced model which is the outcome of this mirror play.

That such films (those of Jancsó, for example) are produced as models of a scriptural amalgam, models of a 'modern' *écriture;* and that they call up readings (given that the receiver is receiving his own message from the emitter) more concerned with the coherence of their argument than with their capacity to question, thereby closing the circuit of identification.

The Confrontation is seductive first of all because of its freshness, its beauty. To say that is not to fall into an easy trap, but rather to express it, in that the film from the outset fulfils its function as an aesthetic object. It presents itself as a product obscuring, not the traces of its fabrication (we see a film-in-the-process-of-being-made and are present at its production in so far as the shooting merges with the editing), but the predestination of its material.

This seems surprising and new, in so far as such a solution reverses a problematic which characterizes a moment of modern cinema, i.e. making a film with materials already used, full of meaning and saturated with culture. Jancsó acts (without difficulty since he has chosen his material expressly for its low resistance to manipulation) as if his content were as new as his method and as if, therefore, he could use it with complete freedom; he overlooks the fact that, in allowing himself such abstraction, he is recuperating to his own advantage all the methodological work of modern cinema so as to become not so much the culmination of an aesthetic process as, undoubtedly, the man who accomplishes a leap, in full misrecognition of the problematic which faced his predecessors.

Above all he uses the technique of re-presentation. We say technique rather than method because he uses that re-presentation to signify reversals, contradictions, about-faces, without questioning the means he uses; certainly without considering that the ensuing aesthetic is itself a re-presentation (produced by the cinema in a precise context and at a precise moment) of his own relations to representation (the filmic image, the product of shooting) and a response to the question: what sort of venture can be invested with an image which is not (is no longer) a hypostatized

Reality? A response which is so adequate to what his cinema so consciously strives to produce that it excludes any questioning of this kind by the director.

The same characters and groups come and go in front of the camera, or the camera comes and goes in front of them; thanks to this, meanings see-saw, roles are reversed, situations inverted, through a management of the signifier which produces the different signifieds in a succession of combinatories.

The film thus produces a meaning which is also the meaning of the more or less real object it sets out to represent (in this case a political situation).

The aesthetic object (though not so aesthetic as all that, one might say, since it does not efface the traces of the work of its fabrication) thus releases its own meaning, which is also the meaning (or meanings) of the more or less real object represented. We are therefore dealing with an aesthetic object which is also an object of knowledge, an object which is both an object of *jouissance* and an object of thought.

And certainly *The Confrontation* is all of these things at once, but at the price of a significant reduction affecting both the pre-filmic material and the cinematic networks which articulate it, affecting the pre-text as much as the text and the meaning it offers.[2]

Hence the ease with which Jancsó could produce an object almost without faults: on the level of minimal meaning where he placed himself to begin with (and which was the absolute condition of this type of creation), he ran no risk of making a mistake, or of encountering any sort of obstacle. The meaning was won in advance by having been lost in advance.[3]

Jancsó's text is not easy to encompass. Despite the extreme spatialization of the scenes created by his camera movements, it is obvious that for him the image is nothing more than the printed film; but possibly the continuity of the shooting answers a need he has to erase the cuts in the text, to make of them a continuity as natural as was the cutting continuity of subjective cinema. This has its reasons and suggests several observations.

1 If the signifier is only that which is inscribed on the screen, the printed film, the director faces the problem of articulating his discourse via a chain of signifiers which has to be *invented entirely* from scratch, where choosing to pass from one thing to another has an integral meaning, because each of these choices decisively and irrevocably makes and unmakes the (non-subjective, and only somewhat narrative) discourse.

2 But this can be done in such a way that the spectator fails to recognize it: by making new propositions appear as if by chance, *within the continuity of the movement*. We are by no means saying that this was Jancsó's intention, but that in following this course he obeyed, perhaps without knowing it, the aesthetic law of surprise, of meaning appearing and vanishing in the place of the discourse.

3 It is worth noting that the cinema of re-presentation today is so closely

linked to 'direct' cinema, seeming thus to shed all means of producing anything except a fiction that seeks to exhaust either the poetic effects of its technique (as in *One Plus One*), or the possible meanings of the signifying combinatories it sets in play (as here).

It is as if, having become conscious (and this was revolutionary) of the objectivity of the image as a piece of film, and of the reality of the filmic object (and no longer of the filmed object), the first act of directors was to deny it, and to hasten to discover the shortest route by which to re-fictionalize it: which was obviously a cinema where the shooting merged with the editing.

4 This perhaps proves how much the end of producing an aesthetic object at any cost has determined the nature of cinema at all times, but particularly now; as if its history were being reduced today to the diverse combinatory methods of shooting and editing, all of which have the function of producing a simulacrum of scriptural production.

5 The problem, important in a different way from that of knowing how to consume this product, even how to do so as intelligently as possible, is to know why it was only possible to invest the image in this particular enterprise.

What is this product? A cinematic object which, while displaying the mechanism of its functioning, is in fact produced as a pure aesthetic object and as the (absolutely naive) representation of an ultimately almost linear model of *écriture*, in the sense that all its twists only give rise to barely dialectical reversals; but a model which, through the schematic reversals to which its elements are constantly subjected, governing their perpetual molecular grouping and separation, passes off as complexity what is merely mechanical complication. (And very irritating at that, on the level of all the crossing to and fro to which the actors are subjected, whose mannerisms, which tend to give the film a *continuous stylization*, and obsessive amplification in themselves point up the superficiality of the film-maker's project.) What is no more than an indefinitely displaced Manichaeism is made to pass for dialectics, a mere puzzle to pass for *écriture*.

Why is a film like this so seductive today? Because of the brilliant compromise it achieves in combining continuity and discontinuity (dance and discourse, scriptural abstraction and organic movement, reading and *jouissance*), polysemy and semantic Manichaeism (red and white, black and white), structural meaning (the signifying combinatory) and textuality (re-presentations); and because its movements and reversals offer a mobility both permanent and dazzling, giving the spectator the illusion of participating in the complexity of an analysis in the act of being made (but which gives pleasure, in that all meaning dissolves). This mobility masks from the spectator the poverty of the grid that Jancsó applies to produce the object we suppose we are discovering, through a phantasmic haze, in the locus of his film – an object in which reality, knowledge and aesthetic pleasure merge, a kind of scale model allowing us to hypostatize at leisure a knowledge (structuralist, Marxist), a method of reading, and a representation of reality and of the cinematic object as we ourselves produce it by means of these aids.

Diverting the means of cinematographic *écriture* from their past (and future?) causes, Jancsó thus accomplishes the *tour de force* of reviving the object apparently destroyed by that *écriture*, the scale model, pointing up what the object is forbidden to analyse, namely the overdetermination of roles and representations. This is what a cinema of re-presentation working from the point of view of meaning might have taken upon itself to analyse, with the help of those movements in and out, which would still be grounded in an aesthetic *jouissance*, without which the film would not be worth much. But they would not serve the end of making us participate in the constant emergence of a meaning for which we would prefer to know why it is never the right one, rather than be subjected to the fascination of an object which (in the manner of innumerable contemporary films) functions like a machine, with less and less of a grip on reality, more and more anchored in aesthetics, to produce a meaning which is never right. But perhaps it is only by producing such a meaning and producing it in such a way that a film today can find acceptance as an aesthetic object (if it is not an aesthetic object, it will not be accepted at all). We may be grateful that the object in question has digested Marxism and structuralism, in order to convey the experience of the decentred subject, the comedy of history, and meaning made, re-made and lost, on to the stage (the screen) which is, in the end, the most unreal and innocuous of all.

Remarks

1 Overdetermination: it is obvious that Jancsó's film does not fail completely to understand overdetermination. Put simply, the film points to it without thinking it. It makes of it a surface of meaning and non-meaning, a surface produced by a play of signifiers which we could call arbitrary (even if it signifies for us the arbitrariness of the arbitrary), in so far as it in fact limits itself to reproducing knowledge about a more or less imaginary object – it hardly matters (a political situation going round in circles) – which it gives the illusion of dismantling, while in fact it is content to show off for us the surface of its contradictions, their effects rather than their causes. Not that these causes are concealed. They are given to be glimpsed at, here and there, in the crevices of the text. The need to analyse them does not govern Jancsó's films at all. He does not, in any case, permit the analysis, fixed as he is in the dead end of a non-meaning which he has committed himself to make the *content*, the *means* and the *end* of his aesthetic enterprise.

2 In saying this we know that we are indulging the utopia of a Marxist

cinema. We are not the only one(s) to do so, and this utopia is perhaps very precious in so far as it is the only representation available to us today for imagining a cinema different from that which we criticize.

3 As for the opposition of reading and *jouissance*, let us clarify a point: it is not a question of opposing the two phenomenologically, in that their opposition does not overlay the opposition between 'expressiveness' and 'signification'. The essential nature of aesthetic pleasure does not have to do with the sensual evocation of sensual objects so much as with the syntagmatic breaks of which the aesthetic object is composed, the falls, repetitions, fissures, syncopes that scan it, the repetitions, surprises, breaks in the meaning, suspensions which counter the reading (cf. music).

4 The problem would thus be to know whether all non-discursive *écriture* does not tend above all else to give us aesthetic pleasure (precisely at the moment when we begin to question its principles), and whether all the 'readings' we give it do not have the sole aim of multiplying this pleasure, at the same time as allowing us a knowledge of the object, a knowledge almost always limited to an assent to the object's aesthetic, in other words to the ideology (to whose production or reproduction we critics contribute) which makes that object acceptable as an aesthetic object (to certain social groups to which we belong).

5 It is obvious that while aesthetics alone cannot modify the status, function and perception of the aesthetic object, in a given era, nor construct the model (or various models) of the *cinematic* aesthetic object and envisage the possible transformations, it is up to criticism to try to analyse this object *as such*; i.e., to practise a reading which will be something other than an assent. Its work is difficult, caught up as it is in a play of recognition in which we must see the effect of an inevitable ideological hold, but which it must try to represent to itself, along with its own roles, masks and snares. For this reason there is a history of cinema to be written (and a history of criticism), a deconstruction of cinematic creativity as it has been practised by the directors who have drawn us to films, so that, for a given period of the cinema, we can at least comprehend the process of its creation, and genuinely read it.

We know that we can achieve this perspective on Lang, or Eisenstein, or the American cinema, that we can understand them from the point of view of the meaning according to which their cinema was produced.

For it is worth remembering that to read is ultimately to place ourselves at the point of view of meaning itself, above all knowing that this meaning is not the right one. The reader's primary task is to be rigorously aware of the ideology in, with, and for which the work was produced, it being understood that only the precise knowledge of this 'surface' can allow the practice of a reading of 'symptoms'.

We can thus hope to speak the truth about Lang, Eisenstein, or the American cinema, in so far as we are today bound not to be deceived about them, because in dealing with them we do not get caught in our own snares, as we do every day, more or less innocently, when dealing with contemporary cinema.

And perhaps by this detour, and it alone, we will be able to find a method which will allow us not to be too easily ensnared by our representations of the cinema of today.

Translated by Joseph Karmel

Jean Narboni: 'How to'

The invariant dual term *formal/political* unifies and articulates the studies devoted to Jancsó; the swing of the pendulum regulates their movement. Each of the two terms must function in turn as safeguard and guarantee for the other. The formal element should ensure that the political-historical aspect not only be reproduced, but understood; the political-historical element should, as an obvious base, preserve the formal from gratuitousness. The right of the artist to practise a productive *écriture* at the expense of naturalism would finally validate the constraints of the formal system upon the reality on which it subsists.

We shall not question the validity of these terms in relation to Jancsó, whose films call for their use. We only wish to avoid the closed infinity of a discourse trapped by the object at which it is aimed and whose repetitive circularity it perpetuates. We would rather not so much stress one term or the other, one after the other, or stress their singularity, their reciprocal incorporation, as conceive of them together, in the disjointed unity which they constitute, and in the articulation of their divergence. The rationale for the pair may thus stand out more clearly, and we may grasp the generation of the relation of its elements.

In an interview published by *Cinéma 67* (February), Jancsó declared: 'It is impossible to speak of reality in symbols and allegories. I am convinced that allegory does not work in film. . . . Moreover, cinema as a genre cannot be abstract, since it is by nature concrete and material. . . .' In April 1967, in *Positif*: 'Abstract theorizing more often than not has no grip on reality.' But in the same text, he adds: 'I always try to stand at a distance from events.' And finally, in *Les Lettres françaises* (December 1966): 'We must not accept historical events, but rather understand them.'

If Jancsó refuses to make a symbolic or allegorical film – incompatible in his eyes with the concrete, material nature of the medium – if he also rejects (in numerous other statements, not cited here) the accusation of deviant, ornamental formalism, what does he mean by his simultaneous demand for *a grip on reality* and 'a distance from events'? Nothing more nor less (the last quotation assures us) than comprehension, cognitive appropriation. As a result, his films would be akin to *structures*, since structuralist activity has defined itself in recent years as the construction of a 'simulacrum' of the object, and the simulacrum itself as simply 'intellect added to the object'. Thus Jancsó's films would represent the application of a knowledge to a historical frame of reference, the addition of a meaning to things (or the subtraction of their empirical being), the highlighting of the operative laws of an object or an event. Without any intention to apply what follows, by an analogical twist, to Jancsó's films, but in order to indicate a certain number of dangers which he may or may not avoid (and it remains for us to *determine* which), we must recall that modern theoretical studies of a Marxist and/or psychoanalytic cast have resulted in a formal rejection of such a notion of structure. Through a necessary digression, we must rehearse the two intertwined categories of reasoning:

– Conceiving of its work as a dual operation of cutting out and fitting together, structuralist activity in this sense claims to reintroduce into the real that knowledge of which the real can only be the object; it holds that knowledge as constitutive of the object, as a rational core to be uncovered. Knowledge then becomes nothing more than an auxiliary to the real, an integrating part rather than the production and transformation of its specific object (the object of knowledge). Consequently, in most cases, the simple working into shape of an area will present itself deceptively as a knowledge of that area;

– Determined by mechanistic presuppositions, such an activity separates structure from its very determination, deprives it of all dynamism, amputates it from its production. It preserves a mutual exteriority of cause and effect, restoring the old, expressive causality (the cause stands outside its effects, in a metaphysical background) and excludes any possibility of access to the fundamental and complex problem of *structural causality*,[5] the structuring process of the structure, the *specific effect of a structure on its components*, and present nowhere except in them.

This static concept of structure resembles that equally persistent one of *model*, when one defines this as a rigged construction capable of 'explaining' the disorder and anarchic dispersion of the empirically real by producing, within a formal system, the rule which assembles that reality. The model thus conceived can no more provide its own proof than can the structure as cutting out and fitting together. A mere formal simulation/representation of its given object and alien to any production/transformation, the model will at best grope towards the fact of which it pretends to supply the law. And that law is thoroughly positivist, if the mark of positivism is not so much its privileging of empiricism or formalism, one or the other, but rather its first positing their difference, the better subsequently to reduce it.[6]

Structure and model, rather than expose their organization to the same accusation of disorder and dispersion as is levelled at the reality from which they are formed, find themselves forced to produce a cause, and a reason for that cause; having failed to produce it believably, however, they must attribute a causal power to the *effects* themselves. What invariably unites such enterprises is in fact simply the presentation of *the effect for the cause*. The question that now arises is whether Jancsó does not consistently set in motion, in the area of cinema, the same type of ensnaring discourse (and ensnaring in that it does not recognize itself as ensnared).

There may be no other reason to consider Jancsó's films as *prototypes* of a modern *écriture* than the fact that they function like the constructions evoked above; that they aim to present themselves as models capable of providing the rule for precisely dated historical/political conjunctures. They would be productive on two grounds: the operation which works the given reality (reduced to its essential trajectories, its lines of force, its basic routes) by another turn of the screw (but Jancsó's command is such that the two operations are one, which can only be undone by an arbitrary after-effect), accomplished by a second formalization, is itself constitutive of the film. For the film is not simply the model of a pre-existent historical reality, but a model to the second power, a model of the activity of the constructor of models. In working the primary matter, these machines simultaneously show their wheels turning, reveal their capabilities and inscribe their productive activity. This is why criticism (ours included), in this array of technological metaphors, finds itself at a loss to determine which of the two mechanisms (the 'depicted' events: stalkings and pursuits, the fixed play of persecution and terror; or the film itself in its progress) grinds the more surely.

Jancsó means to give us for these infinitely varied games (in which we will later examine the disposition of figures and their roles) a cause, *the* cause: History, and more specifically the Hungarian people in that history – 'Such is the goal of each of my films: What must be done in order for the people of this country finally to become adult and worthy of Europe?' Moreover, Jancsó directs his attention exclusively to the area of political superstructures and to an analysis of the mechanics of power and repression, of police terror and the movement of armies. But can we say that, because he attempts to indicate the laws (not without hope of helping somewhat to transform them), he produces an understanding strictly in accordance with historical materialism? If materialism indeed defines itself by its refusal to subsume examples under a law and to conceive of a law *other than* as the law of its object, the answer must be negative. In fact, history for Jancsó, whatever the specific historical event he treats and the (unquestionable) exactness of the facts he communicates, is a founding category *laid in place* by an inaugural gesture and not by a constructed concept: Jancsó's 'experience', as always in such a case, provides him with a justification[7] or the retrospective appearance of a justification. History capitalized, elevated or elided to the status of an unreasoned Cause (in which one recognizes the mythic narrative, a dimension constantly present in Jancsó's films), untiringly renewing the cycle of eternal returns, locus of all discord and division, motor of the arbitrary on which it impresses its law in order to give it an order – that History passes itself off as an abstract, transcendental, universal Law, always and everywhere valid. Austria-Hungary in 1867 and Count Raday's police terror, Red Hungary crushed in 1918, Horthy's regency, the Popular Colleges in 1946, all provide verifications of this law, serve as particular cases of a rule which they, equalized and levelled under that History, are content to confirm.

Of necessity, we turn to the formal/political pair, in order to examine the consequences (consequences apparently governing their cause) which result from the preceding. If Jancsó's history is in fact the strict and inflexible circle within which man, like history, must always turn, the doubling of Jancsó's descriptive and non-explanatory process by critical discourse will not take us one step further. Here, too, the 'working into shape' seeks to pass for knowledge. We can record its figures and shifts (an easy task, since they designate themselves and signal their formulation), we can transfer the unfolding of their configurations into a linear *écriture*, but we will never locate the principle of their variation. That has been done, we can't re-do it. By contrast, if, in basing Jancsó's films in a coherent system, we discover that they are ruled by such a concept of history, we can hope to produce their ultimate determination. The invariable question posed by the formation/deformation of formal figures, their arrangement deconstructed as soon as set, will appear, then, as a simulacrum of a question asked in discourse of an answer already given; a response which is the condition for the existence and the formulation of the question itself (according to an Answer-Question-Answer procedure: men are duped by history. Why are they duped by history? Because they are duped by history. My films will show you how, which you will interpret as why). And in order – as in any obsessional discourse (Lacan defines obsessional neurosis as 'defensive decomposition, similar in its principles to those illustrated in redans and zig-zag trenches'; note the disconcerting analogy with the way Jancsó's films work, the appropriateness of both terms) – in order to pass off the how as the why, the discourse must include a stand-in for the cause, the counterpart of a cause. The discursive agitation, the inexorable movement of the figures, playing at dialectics, has no other function and does nothing more than displace and infinitely vary, through recuperation, the loss of the cause which structures them. Each stage stands in, with regard to the one it generates, for this absent cause; each subject assumes alternately the *place* of master and slave, dominant and dominated. This panic expansion, this frantic circulation which sketches the cartography of blindness, must reabsorb all accidents in a nervous continuity, must delay as much as possible the moment of the cut, or rupture, in order not to see the appearance and probable intensification of the split which it represses and denies. (Note, for example, that the film has to endorse – by freezing the image – the gunshot which closes *Silence and Cry;* and that the only close-up in all Jancsó's films, that of Judith in *The Confrontation,* is immediately cancelled by the resumption of the film, the students blocking her departure, and the red shirt of Laci at the end of the bridge chromatically signalling the sure return to movement, just as the policeman's phrase ensures its indefiniteness: 'You may become minister some day'.)

An obsessive resifting guarantees the coherence of Jancsó's discourse, and confers on it a singular power of conviction. Only a critical discourse mystified in its own right can in fact see it as inconclusive, as a suspension of meaning (I ask questions, I don't give answers). The myth of an open work may for a moment have supported this type of error; but nothing, finally, is more conclusive than a closed indefiniteness.[8] Jancsó's films, in which the questions are presupposed by the answer they imply, formulating the problem of man *confronted with* history (if the subtitles of *The Confrontation* are correct) and not *in* history, escape their author's project of demystification and the context which has specifically produced them, but run the risk of reinforcing scepticism and eliminatory disillusionment. The generation of rightist readings is an ever possible penalty for the films' coherence, since this last might be (and is) that of ideological discourse. Such a penalty has been imposed on them in various places during the past several years.

Translated by Leigh Hafrey

Jean-Louis Comolli: 'Autocritique'

1. System and meaning in Jancsó

If we consider three of Jancsó's films, *The Round Up, The Red and the White, Silence and Cry,* bearing in mind the dates (1966, 1967, 1968) and the socio-cultural context of their viewing (in France, the time of a particular reflection on modern cinema), it is understandable that attempts at criticism (mine among them) confined themselves almost without exception to what immediately struck the eye (of the critic). What critics found there was fascinating, even reassuring, in that it involved what they were trying to grasp in modern cinema – filmic functioning.

Understandable, too, how these readings (mine among them) could settle rather naively for a simple *description* of that functioning in place of its analysis. These three films (their accumulation reinforcing the effect) set in operation a formal system at once rather simple (organized around relatively few parameters: movement in and out of frame and laterally, mis-framing, mobility of field, all more or less reducible to the problematic of empty field/full field – the actor's sudden appearance in the filmed field and the signifying effect of this appearance) and very consistent (the effect of consistency due above all to the necessarily repetitive organization of these parameters). They also and above all foregrounded that system, showing it as a *system at work*. Simply grasping the principle of that system (a principle automatically articulated by the system as the film unfolds, since its figures repeat themselves) gave rise to the illusion that the reading had marked, surveyed and unravelled the film's signifying web (which was the case) and had in the process exhausted all the film's meanings (which was not the case).

It is all well and good – today – to acknowledge this, as do Oudart and

Narboni. But simply beause the reading given Jancsó's system in these three films amounted to pure description, to a mirroring of the system, we cannot make the following assumptions: first, that the films themselves amount to nothing more than the production of this system plus its foreordained reading (a circuit of answers-questions-answers); second, that the kind of reading produced – and even programmed – by these three films will automatically serve to interpret *The Confrontation* as well. For no matter how profound the invariability of Jancsó's system, it is not immutable – otherwise there would be no further films. It is not without contradictions, it is not incapable of changing in order to surmount these contradictions.

What objective causes governed this too perfect equation of critical discourse with the discourse of the films?

To begin with, what is particular to these films is that they ostentatiously exhibit – they *represent* – their own functioning. In order for critical discourse to be able to 'stick to' the film so closely, to the point where it becomes nothing more than a description and repetition of the film, the film itself first had to equate formal events (entrances into/exits from the field, movements of the camera-actor, etc.) and dramatic events (the same). *What the film tells – its story – is nothing but the story of the regulated modifications of its own spatio-temporality: the play of its parameters.*

If this is in fact correct, it is almost too fine. What a godsend for criticism, this takeover of narrative by representation. To describe the filmic work in terms of its very own laws, all you had to do was to describe (relate, repeat) this 'story'. The work of criticism was thereby that much more simplified, *justified*. Which couldn't fail to provide a certain *jouissance*, and the phenomenon of recognition, of auto-satisfaction. (That *jouissance*, so Oudart assures us, is the only one that modern, mechanical and mirroring cinema can give us, whereas classical cinema offers an infinitely less masturbatory kind. But I will discuss this idyllic vision of classical cinema and its presuppositions some other time. Let me just point out here that things are not that simple and Lang cannot be the only point of reference for reflection on classical cinema. There is also Lubitsch, a film-maker who took full advantage of the reading of the empty field/full field, for example.)

Let us go further, to get to the second and principal cause: this little game of reciprocally programmed answers-questions-answers was playable on only one condition; that from the outset, or in the course of the game, all meaning should be declared out of bounds; that the processes of the film's functioning and of its reading should start with and proceed by placing its meaning between parentheses, by dismissing the meaning from the film and from an 'understanding' of the film; that we considered (as the three films invited us to do) *the signifiers as signifieds and the only signifieds.*

Under these conditions, what was substituted for the problematic of the meaning and referents of the filmic discourse was the pure and simple contemplation, the exposition, of the Jancsian system of representation. Not only could this representational system be said to govern the film's functioning, but it came to constitute its entire meaning. The pendulum-like movements of the camera-actors complex thus 'signified' the swing from one pole to another within such paired opposites as power-repression, active-passive, etc. In the sovereign play of this automatized equivalence (quite fascinating, after all – which is the reason Jancsó's films can only be read and reflected upon afterwards, never at the moment of viewing), what is left out, evacuated as a negligible quantity (as a residue – but it is precisely the residues of readings of this kind which should interest us, for generally they are made up of all that which invalidates the readings), is everything which should raise real problems with respect to the meaning (not meanings) of the film: its relation to History, its motivations, its referents – the meaning which mobilizes its signifiers, not simply the one which its signifiers evince.

Any meaning which passes through the film being thus purged from the process of reading (and certainly the three Jancsó films in question lend themselves to this exclusion, favouring it, perhaps initiating it themselves – an issue we will consider below), a series of meaning-artefacts springs into existence, out of nowhere, a series of instantaneous tautological epiphanies (the meaning of what comes into view in the field is the coming into view, the meaning of that which reverses the field is the reversal, etc.). In a certain way, this condensation of signifiers-signifieds made it permissible to speak of a 'meaning produced' by the film, of a signification arising from the film's formal arrangement. But precisely to the extent that the significations exactly match the signifying series (*are* these series and are therefore exhausted by them), the reading which follows (can only *follow*) and captures the successive appearances-disappearances of the series of 'meanings' produced as the film unwinds, must remain blind to the question of the film as a signifying totality. The reading is led (by the film's movement, by the system's unwinding) to consider the film as an accumulated series of 'meanings', of paired oppositional signifiers which add to or subtract from one another (the 'phases' or 'times' of an operating mechanical motor being defined by repetition and circularity). It is not led to examine what has set the mechanism working (and keeps it working, for we are dealing with a film, which cannot progress of itself); nor to question the meaning which – necessarily – traverses the film (and how its passage is achieved) and, no less necessarily, closes it off.

Jancsó's films function so well that they have encouraged a reductive reading, as being nothing more than their functioning, produced by it and for it. And this reading in turn transformed the films into mechanisms which functioned in a vacuum, because it was their functioning in a vacuum which allowed the reading, anchored it in its own fascination, and gave it the security of the best guarantee – that (at last) a reading could be the pure reflection of filmic functioning, that the act of reading alone could certify the equivalence between the circuit of forms and the circulation of meanings.

All this is by way of an autocritique, in the course of which we have already acquired several means of criticism.

We must, then, get away from the mirror-like circularity of film system = reading system. But to escape it, we must change the problematic and ask the why of the system, since by the very fact that it is a system it furnishes its own how. It is not enough (to free us) to reverse the sequence of film = reading to reading = film. Simply because the critical readings of Jancsó's system were no more than the mechanical description of a representative mechanism, this does not permit us to infer that the films are nothing more than this representative mechanism, than what their descriptive reading is based on. For whether, in fact, the system produces the reading or the reading produces the system, we are still caught in questions of equivalence (six of one = half a dozen of the other), we are still outside the realm of the dynamic consequences, the non-equivalence of meaning as cause and meaning as effect. The mechanics of the system, and of the reading, do not explain the system and the reading as the same mechanism.

We must ask ourselves, then, what governs both system and reading, *and that is the status of the referents* in Jancsó's films. (We will have to make a general study of the status of the referents in cinema, for we have only just emerged from the formalist crisis in film criticism, which systematically barred the referent.) The great referent is History. In each film, the referents are a particular historical moment in Hungarian history.

It is altogether clear and significant (charged with meaning) that *The Red and the White, Silence and Cry* (and *Winter Wind* – but not *The Confrontation,* an exception I shall come back to) begin with – open with – a short montage sequence, before or during the credits, of photographic documents situating the period of the film, its insertion into History. Granted, this initial reference in each film is hardly informative: photos, images, old newsreels *showing* fragments of this or that event, contemporary with the film and thus undeniably dating it, but in no way constituting a discourse of History, nor even an exposition of the facts. Whatever its limits, however, the sequence unquestionably anchors the film in History and labels it as a product of this History and a commentary on it. Inscribed in History, then, the film will have to inscribe History in itself, and it is this dual intersection that we must take into account in order to appreciate it.

Still, one might suspect that these brief, succinct, historical reminders at the beginning of the films actually serve as a guarantee against the a-historical discourse of the film – a-historical in that it sets up the general equivalence of power = repression. In fact, although they are objectively situated in historical periods which are distinct and different, if close in time, *The Red and the White* and *Silence and Cry,* for example, seem to contain just about the same discourse: violence is everywhere, on one side (revolutionaries, the oppressed) as well as the other (reactionaries, oppressors); there is an interchangeability of the terms torturer-victim; and whatever the historical circumstances, the equivalence of power-repression is unvarying. This kind of discourse can be (and is) attributed to Jancsó's films. And it is in any case the discourse which emerges from a reading of the signifiers in these films, which offer within the principal equivalence of power-repression a series of specific equivalences: the 'prisoner' takes his guard prisoner, the punisher is punished, etc., or more simply still, the one who is to the right of the screen crosses to the left, the one in the foreground moves into the background, and so on. But is it not precisely the contrary which is occurring, so that the sum of these particular equivalences, the accumulation of these particular signifiers which signify themselves, produces a general meaning for the film as being repetition and variation in all possible modes and at every moment of the this = that equivalence, and as being the very principle of these equivalences: the meaning of the equivalences is the equivalent? In other words, can the previously analysed reading of Jancsó's system produce any meaning other than that of the equivalence of everything with everything, at all levels, since that reading is itself an equivalent of the system? Is the meaning which must be taken into consideration by a non-tautological reading, then, the one which results from the quasi-infinite accumulation of signifiers which are themselves tautological, to be enclosed in the circle of equivalences? The first meaning refuses to reckon with History, and if the films were located nowhere and at no time this would change nothing in the immutable unwinding of the system and of the thesis that power = repression. The second meaning is a reflection on History, it takes off from History and from certain of its specifications (and not just any of these, but specifically from moments of confrontation in which oppositions are perfectly cut and dried: there are the Reds and the Whites, Horthy's police and Hungarian peasants) to ponder a perhaps idle and misplaced question: is there an equivalence between power and repression? Between justice and violence? Perhaps Jancsó in his 'heart of hearts' concludes that the answer is yes, and perhaps he is mistaken and must be reproached for a tendentious reading of History, but one cannot pretend that this problematic is absent from History or that films which pose it do so in an a-historical discourse. History here is not the guarantee for a series of Jancsian fantasies (and even if the coherence of the system is obsessional in nature, Lacanian psychoanalysis cannot stop the subject of this obsession from being History and not Jancsó). History is what the films question and what questions them in return.

The status of the historical referent in each film, aside from the previously discussed opening sequences, is less simple still. To begin with, the signifiers which anchor it are not numerous: settings, costumes, words. Second, they are not easily readable to us, and this is a central question. For if we wish to examine seriously a film's system of significations, the precision and validity of its historical referents, we must begin by examining the elementary gaps in *our* reading of the film. The Frenchman who sees *The Round Up* or *Silence and Cry* receives little information from the film because he possesses so little information on the film's referents. A truism, but one we must not forget or fail to recognize, precisely because we may be led to take Jancsó's discourse for a general discourse, whereas the Hungarians perceive it to be specific, apposite. Since we know virtually nothing about Hungarian history and have not lived it, even today, we find it difficult to effect a relevant reading, difficult even to catch the films' references to that history (past and present). How tempting, then, to slip into the only reading which remains practicable: the generalist interpretation, a decoding of the film's system and its projection into the realm of meaning.

Now, not only do these films take as their framework a precise historical moment (completely hermetic to us), but they relate it to living history, being lived today (history which is, in the case of Hungary, by definition foreign to us). This system, which *we* are able to see as functioning in a vacuum, in fact teems with referents, but we do not read them as such. We read them as detours, a jumble of signifieds, obstacles to our reading, whereas they are the foundations of the only valid reading of the film. This mechanistic dialectic of power and repression which Jancsó's films set in motion can only appear 'abstract', non-historical, if we judge it solely with reference to the necessarily abstract notion of History; and for us it carries neither the lived nor the historical weight that it does for the Hungarians.

I will come back to this immediately, but I wish to note immediately that it implies cinema is no longer 'the universal language' it has always been considered. Was it ever? In the Hollywood era it was – for one part of the world, colonized by American themes and ideologies. But with the multiplication of 'national cinemas', cinema becomes multicultural, the site of a discourse of all ideologies.

Thus rather than eliminating signifieds (formalism) or singling out only universal signifieds (love, life, death, etc.) *without considering their determination by ideology* (humanism), criticism which aspires to be Marxist cannot avoid examining the level of signifieds and that of their referents in the film, just as it must study the place of the Subject, of the Absent One, of the Form, of all that which already constitutes its discourse. 'Let us indulge the utopia of a Marxist cinema' (Oudart), and let us criticize Jancsó from the point of view of this utopia, but let us not delay passing from psychoanalysis as a universal referent or Marxism as a utopian referent to the study via Marxism and the analytical method of the referents themselves. If there is a production of meaning in the film, this meaning can only be studied in its relation with its signifiers, on the one hand, and with its referents on the other. Any other reading would be incomplete – that is, it would exclude ideology, which would not, for all that, be absent from the reading.

The historical referent in Jancsó's films is thus a double one: a reference to a given historical moment in Hungary, a moment more or less familiar to Hungarian viewers of these films, and an overdetermination of this reference by the country's contemporary history (lived in its effects, even if distant, by the viewers). Now one need not look very far for what has been the biggest political factor in the contemporary history of Hungary – and continues today to determine the whole of the country's problems: Stalinism. For the establishment of the socialism which is now occurring in Hungary, Stalinism – its principles, its after-effects – is the great problem. For the communist Jancsó (who has lived Stalinism in Hungary), it is Stalinism which is the basis of the question of the equivalence power = repression.

We know that today's Marxist theoreticians have not studied (been able to study? wished to study?) all the causes, all the implications of the question of Stalinism, which thus takes on the flavour of the unexamined, the eclipsed, the obsessional unspoken. A central question for today's communism, but also a complex question, not easily resolved. (Destalinization did not explain Stalin. It endeavoured to strike him from History and from the life of the people's republics, and it did not entirely succeed in either case.)

Precisely because of the complexity of the problem (heightened by the continuing anti-communist use of anti-Stalinism), Hungarian film-makers have long been unable to say anything of this question, which does in fact obsess them (it is only today, and only in veiled terms, that we can see the problem met head on, in *The Confrontation* and several other recent Hungarian films). A strange situation, indeed, where one can talk about *only one thing* – and that is precisely what one must not talk about.

Obviously, the complicated phenomenon of Stalinism cannot be exhaustively defined by a formula of the kind, power = repression. But it is precisely what is implied, what is firmly indicated, by this formula. The mechanisms of the arbitrary, of terror, of oppression are set in motion under Stalinism, although indeed their causes are more obscured, more hidden, less readable than their effects.

We can now understand what mobilizes Jancsó in History: situations (not analogues of Stalinism, obviously, since History neither repeats itself nor 'stammers') in which the same mechanisms were operable (and thus the mechanisms, not the historical moments, are equivalent), in which the same effects were produced by different causes, but causes equally as obscure, as hidden, as those of Stalinism. Jancsó's films are a discourse on one of the questions of Stalinism, studied not in its causes (still elusive, or inexpressible) but in its effects, these last perfectly registered, lived, actual. Whence the system of these films, where meaning is delivered through effects of meaning, through signifiers, but where none the less a meaning determines and passes through the system, founds it and governs it: the problematic of one of Stalinism's modes of being. A discourse which is thus by definition decentred, since it flows between two meanings, the one which determines it and the one which it produces.

We observe the same decentring in the status of the film's historical referents: it is always a question of the situation in a given historical period (and from this point of view the film insists on historical authenticity and is supported by extensive documentary research, etc.), but it is at the same time a question of another, unnamed, historical period: Stalinism. Jancsó's films are thus not parables about the present in the guise of detours through the past. On the contrary, they speak simultaneously of the past and of a present which is past but still problematical. History is read with today's questions, given the impossibility of reading the very recent, very present historical past of Stalinism with the questions of historical materialism.

II. The system changes when the meaning changes

It is tempting, having described the system in three films (*The Round Up, The Red and the White,* and *Silence and Cry*) and having criticized this system and the reading it requires, to extend this critique automatically to every new film Jancsó makes, as being subject to the same system, whose obsessional consistency would inevitably adjust any new variations. Thus it seems perfectly natural to apply to *The Confrontation* a critique formulated by the system, one that is signalled by the previous reading of the other films. But a recursive reading such as this (see my article, 'Développements de la ligne Jancso', *Cahiers* 212), a critique based on retrospection, commits the error of reinstating a quasi-metaphysical conception of cinematographic work, for it takes the inter-relations between a film-maker's various films to be a-historical. The relation between the films would seem to be that of unchanging identity, of resumption – all the system need do, once it is set up, is to repeat itself, producing on demand a series of films, all equivalent to each other, the whole of the process seemingly immune to any determination by history, ideology or politics. As though, Jancsó having perfected his model, his cinematographic production becomes simply an automatic gesture of recasting.

Of course, this is never the case. And only the constant effort on the part of the critics to locate *their line of greatest convenience* can explain how they dare to assemble and confront whole groups of films removed from their historical moment of composition, altogether ignoring the network of determinations which definitively places these films in a relation of difference.

Between *The Confrontation* and *Silence and Cry* there is an automatic, logical leap – automatic in that the objective conditions in Hungary and the world changed between these two films, and Jancsó's situation in relation to these conditions changed too; and logical in that Jancsó's discourse, *following from itself,* was moving towards a statement of the forbidden about Stalinism and progressing at the same time down through History so as to approach the point from which it had left it: the Stalinist years. In *The Confrontation*, because the direction of the ideology in Hungary permitted it (and this was so because the objective facts had changed, allowing for a certain liberalization, and because Jancsó and the Hungarian cinema had acquired more importance), a historical moment of the Stalinist period in Hungary is, for the first time, dealt with directly. From the end of the war through the trial of Rajk, leader of the Popular Colleges, an event which was the first public manifestation in Hungary of the repressive Stalinist system (fake trial, phoney confessions, but accompanied by a propaganda campaign so effective that the young communist members of the Popular Colleges were persuaded that their friend Rajk had really betrayed socialism – though it did not take Rajk's later rehabilitation for everyone to begin having doubts), there occurred two years of wavering, which the film precisely describes.

The revolutionary enthusiasm of the Hungarian students was at work in the Popular Colleges movement, and all that we are shown of it in *The Confrontation* is authentic, a fact confirmed by the very resistance the film has encountered from certain former members of the movement, who are today important functionaries. The students' enthusiasm very quickly upset the Stalinist leadership of the Party, and the movement was systematically dismantled, even to the point of Rajk's arraignment. Once again it is impossible to judge the causes and reasons behind this policy. We do not know, and perhaps we shall never know exactly what justified or did not justify the decision, made at the request of higher-ups, to liquidate the Popular Colleges. The young people who lived through the era, of whom Jancsó was one, still cannot explain it. The Party's tactics were completely mysterious; the Stalinists could only reign by the power of this mystery, by remaining beyond reach of all causes and reasons. Once again: it is at the level not of causes but of effects alone that we can make a reading of this or that moment in Stalinism. And in *The Confrontation*, if the motivations of students of different tendencies (those believing in a dialogue, the hard-liners, the leftists) are clearly given, those of the directors of the Federation of Colleges remain completely mysterious. Their tactic, which was to destroy democratic centralism, first by imposing a decision on the individual cell – that it vote – and then by breaking the vote, is clear in its effects: the students are no longer collectively masters of their fate, they no longer have confidence in the collective representations of the organization, they become involved in manipulation and denunciation. But the reason for this tactic, whose effects are pointed out by the film, remains absent; the meaning can only be tautological: Stalinist methods act to establish Stalinism.

For the first time speaking directly, without historical circumlocutions, of Stalinism – its acts and effects – *The Confrontation* cannot preserve the system of representation in the previous films. The difference is striking. For the first time the characters speak and conduct a discourse; they are no longer the echo of the film-maker's orders to his actors. Political arguments, tactical ideas confront each other, but in the words and conduct of the characters. These characters thus have a status which is radically different from those in Jancsó's other films. They are no longer reduced and paired according to absence/presence in the field, they are not interchangeable or equivalent, the 'soft' faction cannot replace the 'hard-liners', etc. Here, the Jancsian system is completely dismantled and transformed by the new meaning it must carry. It no longer rules the film.

From the moment when for the first time Jancsó's characters speak and have the status of real characters, with the complexity of motivation, all the variations and nuances of behaviour which are the subject of the film – from that moment when History is inscribed in the *film* by each character's speech and action – a dialectical relation is established between characters which explodes the Jancsian system of the signifiers-signifieds condensation. In order for the meaning to come through, it no longer suffices for the actors to change their place in the field, or for the camera to make them appear or disappear. It is necessary, on the contrary, that their discourse be constituted into signifying units, into chains of meaning. *The Confrontation* thus presents a series of sequences logically connected to one another, in the order of development of a discourse. And if they contradict each other, they do not cancel each other out, they are not equivalent, as were the signifying units in *Silence and Cry* – interchangeable, without any order, discontinuous and non-chronological. The logical and chronological succession of these sequences, which one cannot invert without destroying the film and its discourse, is a new element in Jancsó's work. The system is no longer its own meaning; it is – if one can still speak of a system – permeated from end to end with a meaning which undeniably guides it. The meaning is no longer constituted by a simple accumulation of equivalent effects of meaning, but by the discursive succession and dialectical relation of a certain number of exactly defined and repeated political signifieds, which are no longer themselves simply the appearance-obliteration of their signifiers.

The Jancsian system thus no longer exists in *The Confrontation* except in a residual form. The scene, for example, at the beginning of the film in which the student in a red shirt takes the policeman's revolver, gives it back to him, playing (but it is nothing more than play) at threats and reversals, dominant/dominated, is made to signify only by the camera's movements of mis-framing and re-framing which remove one character or the other from the field and make them re-enter the field at every change in role.

But it would be more accurate to say that the system has taken on a meaning, and that the acquisition of this meaning has transformed it, integrating it into the discourse as the play of its figures. Oppositions, reversals, inversions do exist in *The Confrontation*, but at the level of the terms and phases of the film's political discourse. The power = repression equivalence has been displaced from the plane of parameters and forms to that of dramatic situations and political acts. When Judith orders the heads of *'provocateurs'* to be shaved, the power = repression equivalence is operative. But, caught in a political discourse, it is immediately corrected by the remark, 'The Nazis shaved heads, so we won't' – spoken by Judith herself, who thus inscribes the power = repression equivalence in History. Whereas under the logic of the system in the earlier films, the character Judith would have remained blind to the significance of her orders and acts, since they would have been dictated, and the character herself activated, by the general principle of equivalence. We can thus say of the characters in *The Confrontation* that they reflect (more or less effectively) their own situation in History and in the film, whereas the actor-characters in the earlier films were but the reflection of the system, of the filmmaker's orders.

The Confrontation is marked by another major difference which must be considered: its song-ballets. We can say of the film's division into two parts – sequences that are sung and danced, sequences that are spoken and acted – that it embodies the division of political discourse into two different orders (whose combination introduces a new parameter into Jancsó's work): the group and the individual. All collective manifestations, all ways of being in a group, are signified by revolutionary songs and excursions, dances or processions. The group is thus defined throughout the film as a moving force (in contrast to the grey and easily fragmented mass of seminarists), which the film's movement itself will come to shatter. How pathetic, in the penultimate sequence, is the last dance of the 'excluded' as their hope flickers; how disquieting, in the last sequence, the whirling line of students who encircle Judith and Terez as though to take them prisoner. These two transformations of group movement in the film indicate all too well that the enthusiasm and élan proper to a 'pure', 'primitive' revolutionary group has given way to constrained movements (ever since the confrontations), to parodies of spontaneity, to what look like police manoeuvres. The film's story could be told by studying the evolution of group movements, by comparing its ballets, juxtaposing its songs. The film narrates the destruction of the notion of the revolutionary group, a systematic destruction which is expressed, at each of its phases, in the performances of the group, dances or songs. All the scenes between the group and those connoted as 'Stalinists' (the directors) are interesting from this point of view: the group is pushed aside, reassembled, crossed, fixed, manipulated – in its decisions, but also in its spatial displacements and figures.

We must thus ask ourselves, in closing this incomplete analysis, about the meaning of *The Confrontation*: has not the problematic of the equivalence of power and repression been transformed into that of the relation of individuals to the group, and especially that of the historical forces which assemble or undermine the group, which decide its fate? Destroyed in *The Confrontation* by the condemnation-exclusion-rehabilitation-departure of its leaders, the group is reinforced in *Winter Wind* by the death of the individual who refuses to integrate himself. Yet another difference we shall have to examine.

Translated by Nancy Kline Piore

Notes

1 *Ecriture* (writing) is a term indicating the process and problematic of inscribing signs in a material support. This problematic is formulated and analysed, crucially for *Cahiers*, in the work of Jacques Derrida, notably in *Writing and Difference* and *Of Grammatology*.

2 This reduction to the least meaning is of necessity received (and produced) within the greatest ambiguity and derives from a tendency towards schematicism and generalization which operates on two levels at once: the aesthetic and the political. Today it of necessity stakes itself heavily, but fairly vainly, on the hypostasizing power of abstraction, such that the weakest meaning can, at the limit, pass for a strong meaning. This is true when the meaning is provisionally right. The cinema has thus provided two kinds of *true abstractions:* the Soviet cinema (Eisenstein) and the obsessional cinema (Murnau, Lang, Mizoguchi), both at their best when politics and obsession were reciprocally overdetermined: *M, Ivan the Terrible, Shin heike monogatari.* (Author's note.)

3 This would hold true above all for *Silence and Cry;* for it is obvious – and this provides its (symptomatic) interest – that *The Confrontation* runs into an obstacle, and that Jancsó's cinematographic mechanism is not authorized to function as freely here as in his preceding film. This is linked to the reintroduction of a subject which, however decentred, and because decentred, poses the political question of the non-meaning of this *quid pro quo.* There and there alone is the film's dialectic; and it is hard to see how Jancsó could have introduced it into his film without the subject having a place there. (Author's note.)

4 'Overdetermination'. The term functions both within the Althusserian and Lacanian writings. For Althusser, it indicates the manner in which the contradictions that inform a complex social totality are articulated to define the conditions of a structure in dominance. See Althusser, 'Contradiction and Overdetermination', *For Marx,* London, New Left Books, 1977. Here the Freudian/Lacanian sense is more evident. It indicates that textuality can be attributed to a condensation of multiple determining factors. See Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis,* London, Hogarth Press, 1973.

5 A concept produced by Lacan and derived from Freud, which Jacques-Alain Miller has called *metonymic causality* ('Action de la structure', in *Cahiers pour l'analyse,* no. 9). Louis Althusser has attempted to apply it and reconcile it to the Marxist *Darstellung* (see *Reading Capital,* New Left Books, 1970, pp. 192–3). An extremely difficult question is at issue here, that of the *efficacity of an absence,* of a structure present only in its elements, present-absent to them. Althusser opposes it radically to (1) mechanistic causality; (2) the expressive causality of Leibniz and Hegel. In structural causality, the structure is present/absent to its visible effects, effective in its very absence: for example, the relations of production are ungraspable in their integrality, at the same time effective and absent from the effects they induce. But this presence of structure solely in its effects bears no relation to the immanence of the cause to its effect of expressive causality, which at the same time assumes a radical exteriority (and not absence) of the cause to its effects (for example, in Hegel, phenomena as *pars totalis* of the idea). (Author's note.)

6 Cf. Alain Badiou, 'Le Concept de modèle', in *Cours de philosophie pour scientifiques* (Maspéro, Paris), from which our text does more than borrow. (Author's note.)

7 That is, in order as much as possible to avoid stand-ins for cause in our own article, and to name if not to produce it: *Stalinism*. (Author's note.)

8 The 'infinite' reading which modern writing solicits bears no similarity to the infinity of readings in allegedly 'open' works. We plan to return to this point in another text. (Author's note.)

6 Editorial: 'Russia in the 20s (I)'

('Russie années vingt I', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 220–221, May–June 1970)

When we published the first Eisenstein text in *Cahiers* 209, we announced 'a series of attempts to examine texts which aims at re-placing them in their historical (cultural and political) context, and at establishing their relevance to a theoretical question which embraces both the cinematic and the extra-cinematic fields.'[1] While we have in fact already discussed and explicated certain of Eisenstein's theoretical positions on several occasions,[2] though never in a systematic way, we have long had in mind the project represented by the present issue. Since our project focused on Eisenstein, it obviously had to 'intersect with' most of the 'currents' (or at least a number of lines) that make up 'the 1920s' in Russia. However, in order to combat the frequent and unjustified mythification of Eisenstein (the myth of the 'solitary genius', sanctioned precisely by the multiplicity of his activities – cf. the frequent comparison with Leonardo da Vinci), such a project risked falling into a different theoretical error, that of *totalization* – attempting to account for an 'era' solely through those activities connected with the cinema. It was therefore essential that we should explicate each of the lines we encountered, equally and independently, while leaving ourselves free to note, whenever possible, the points of intersection, areas of overlap and above all, conversely, the points of friction and divergence. We could thus, from the outset and intentionally, impart to this collection of texts the stellate and centrifugal structure which alone is capable of accounting for differences (whereas an inevitably artificial, *a posteriori* realignment would mean making unwarranted associations, especially since it is well known that the same word in the context of different problematics does not cover the same concept. Cf. the polemics at work in the texts of Vertov and Eisenstein).

Moreover, even if we study each of these series closely, we are aware of a further danger – that of overestimating or miscalculating the effect of apparent 'break' connected with all avant-gardes. The risk is one of systematically re-evaluating all these avant-gardes after the event, without taking real account of either their historical situation or their degree of theoretical rigour.

Conscious of the complex and heterogeneous factors that have determined the uneven development of these diverse lines, we have sought first to mark their diversity and complexity, rather than to mask them. The 'critical' texts we publish (by Bernard Eisenschitz and Jean Narboni of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, as well as those by Georges Sadoul and Vyacheslav Ivanov) are therefore to be read not as the 'glue' or 'bond' of this issue, but rather as signal boxes indicating divergences rather than seeking apparent unities, ensuring a process of separation and disentanglement (indeed opening up new routes) rather than assemblage and amalgamation.

As to the publication of actual texts from the 1920s, our concern has been twofold. First, a purely 'archaeological', non-normative action, giving access to often quoted and in some cases famous texts, nearly all unavailable in French; at the same time we were concerned to distinguish the ways in which these texts are occasionally already part of our immediate past from the ways in which they are *still* part of our present. This perspective also applies to reading Eisenschitz, Narboni, Ivanov, Sadoul and Zorkaya.

We believe our reasons for choosing these particular texts are fairly obvious. We have selected an interview with Lev Kuleshov, the first Russian film-maker to reflect theoretically upon his practice; six texts by Vertov, ranging from his first manifesto in 1922 to a text on sound cinema in 1929: an essential text by Eisenstein on materialist film practice. These effectively represent the most important points of focus in what was then the specific theoretical practice of cinema. We have also selected major texts by Tynianov and Eichenbaum, a screenplay by Mayakovsky and extensive quotations from Meyerhold, texts by Kozintsev and a (particularly ambiguous) text by Khlebnikov. These illustrate the many and diverse points of coincidence and intersection in practices and problematics, whether in linguistics, poetry, cinema, theatre or the plastic arts; the political position is expressed by Lenin's famous text on 'proletarian culture'.

Finally, a concise chronology and a brief bibliography were necessary if this collection was to become, as we intended it to be above all: a (primary) tool.

At a time when the thrust of the most consistent Marxist research has begun to demolish the mechanistic conception of history as linear, empirically given and dictatorially universalizable, and has posited instead a stratified history, yet to be constructed, articulated in blocks and series in complex ways, we do not intend in 'Russia in the 20s' to reconstruct the 'face' or the 'mentality' or the 'broad outline' of an 'era' (all particularly confused notions), with the cinema seen as its reflection, mirror or microcosm, in the expressive tradition. 'Russia in the 20s' here simply means, in Jacques Lacan's phrase, the 'cutting edge of fixed dates' (although that edge cut wide and deep in revolutionary Russia, as its final chronology makes clear); this means the minimum empirical frame in which no fact can emerge without first being historicized; history itself is another matter, being 'the emergence of truth within the real'. Cinema thus appears in this collection as a *signifying practice*,[3] articulated non-hierarchically to other practices.

We repeat that we had to avoid the twofold trap of improper syntheses, totalitarian simplifications and hasty classifications (under pretext of the 'proliferation of schools' in revolutionary Russia, or the 'blossoming' of avant-gardes) on the one hand, and inventories of separate, juxtaposed lines on the other hand. (Avoiding the trap of amalgamation could mean falling into that of mere fragmentation.) Instead we have sought to think through the articulation of these lines, their interdependence and their connections, to construct their history proper and their points of contact. October 1917 did not apportion all things at the same time or in the same way.

Translated by Randall Conrad

Notes

1 'Pauvre Salieri (en guise d'envoi)', *Cahiers* 209, February 1969.

2 During this period, *Cahiers* undertook a major Eisenstein translation project. Fifteen instalments of his 'Ecrits' were published (*Cahiers* 209–26). The publication of the Russian materials culminated in the special issue, *Cahiers* 220–1. For an elaborated statement of the link between Eisenstein's dialectical materialism and *Cahiers'* own evolving critical practice, see Comolli's 'La Pratique didactique de S.M.E.' in *Cahiers* 226–7 and 228. For a critical assessment of *Cahiers'* use of Soviet materials see William Guynn, 'The Political Program of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, 1969–77', *Jump Cut* no. 17, 1978.

3 'Signifying practice': a term introduced in the writing of Julia Kristeva indicating a text not as a regulated, finished formal structure, but as a site of production of meaning considered in relation to the perspectives of psychoanalysis and historical materialism. Kristeva explains: 'I shall call signifying practice the establishment and the countervailing of a sign system. Establishing a sign system calls for the identity of a speaking subject within a social framework, which he recognizes as a basis for that identity. Countervailing the sign system is done by having the subject undergo an unsettling, questionable process; this indirectly challenges the social framework with which he had previously identified, and it thus coincides with times of abrupt changes, renewal, or revolution in society.' Quoted in Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1980, p. 18. See also Kristeva, 'Signifying Practice and Mode of Production', *Edinburgh '76 Magazine* (BFI), 1976.

7 Serge Daney, Jean-Pierre Oudart: 'Work, Reading, Pleasure'

('Travail, lecture, jouissance', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 222, July 1970)

These texts are not intended to be theoretical; rather they are symptoms, emerging at a moment when the cinema, having exhausted its primary forms and finished resifting the (still active) obsessions which produced them, today seems to be marking time in an endless questioning of its 'reality'.

These texts are articulated on such a questioning and are intended to raise more questions on the status of the cinema in relation to the other representational arts, and the situation of its production with regard to an ideology of visibility which such a questioning may fulfil or destroy – as yet it is hard to say which – but for which it undoubtedly signals a crisis.

These texts are produced by work on (in) those obsessions which they overlap in relation to that ideology, from which they do not claim to be disengaged, being too engaged in the illusions they denounce to claim to integrate their position into the universality of a theory which could only camouflage their deficiencies.

1 'On Salador'

0 'What is it that is now "appearance" to me! Verily, not the antithesis of any kind of essence – what knowledge can I assert of any kind of essence whatsoever, except merely the predicates of its appearance! Verily not a dead mask which one could put upon an unknown X, and which to be sure one could also remove! Appearance is for me the operating and living thing itself, which goes so far in its self-mockery as to make me feel that here there is appearance, a Will o' the Wisp, a spirit dance, and nothing more.' (Nietzsche)[1]

1 There is a great deal lacking in the continuing claim to regard the cinema as being related to reality, to the world, or to life as it is lived. First and foremost, let us take the relation to the visual. The visual is neither

the double nor the outrageous, false or inaccurate misrepresentation of something else; the visual *is* something else, something which is not neutral, which has its own laws, effects and exigencies. The cinema which dreamt of a 'direct engagement with the world' was, at a deeper level, postulating that from the 'real' to the visual and from the visual to its filmed reproduction the same truth was *reflected* infinitely, with neither distortion nor loss. And it may be supposed that in a world where one readily says 'I see' for 'I understand', such a dream did not come about by chance, for the dominant ideology, which sets up the 'real = visible' equation, has every interest in encouraging it.[2]

2 Ideology and cinema. The problem has in recent times been displaced; suspicion has been shifted on to the simple act of filming, on to the camera and its construction, etc. Granted. But why not retrace the issue further back still, and challenge that which is both served by the camera and precedes it: the quite blind trust in the visible, the gradually acquired hegemony of the eye over the other senses, a society's taste and need for seeing itself reflected, etc.? In so doing, it becomes difficult to avoid a shaming iconoclasm in which all relations to the image are experienced as mortal sins (Godard and the false images of *Pravda*); difficult also to avoid losing sight of the specific phenomenon of cinema, a moment in the general history of the specular, a moment itself endowed with a history, whose end point we may possibly foresee.

3 Photology. The cinema is therefore connected to the Western metaphysical tradition, a tradition of seeing and sight for which it fulfils the photological vocation. What is photology and what indeed might the discourse of light be? A teleological discourse, undoubtedly, if it is true that teleology 'consists of neutralizing duration and force in favour of *the illusion* of simultaneity and form' (Derrida).

4 Duration and force: in other words, work. 'Light effaces its traces; invisible itself, it renders visible', always giving us a finished, perfected world in which work (to begin with, its own) is properly speaking unimaginable, a world which we recognize only because we have never known it and which we risk never knowing at all, taken in as we are by its 'apparentness'. Let us designate as 'photological' that obstinate will to confuse vision and cognition [*connaissance*], making the latter the compensation of the former and the former the guarantee of the latter, seeing in directness of vision the model of cognition.

5 There is one *oeuvre* which, with an acuteness not shared by others (which is why it seems so exceptional), has constantly tried to pin down that equation of vision and cognition: Rohmer's. Significantly, it has only achieved this aim within the framework of an educational film, *Les cabinets de physique au XVIIIe siècle*. Once the conditions of experiment are set up and the results allowed for, what happens 'between' – i.e. the film, the actual time of the experiment – is simultaneously the unfolding of a spectacle and the birth of an idea. 'We have relapsed into the mirror myth of knowledge as the vision of a given object or the reading of an established

text, neither of which is ever anything but transparency itself, the sin of blindness as much as the virtue of clear-sightedness belonging by right to vision, to the eye of man' (Althusser).

6 Not long ago, the 'world view' and the 'exercise of observation', privileged themes in criticism, were equivalent at all levels simultaneously: the characters scanned the sets, the film-maker looked at the world and the spectator looked at the film. Any awakening of consciousness was in the first instance a training of the look, and if by chance the film happened to be political, all class struggle was reabsorbed into a sunrise. A heliopolitics of which a film like *Andrei Roublev* is only a belated example. (If we are considering recent films, we prefer Sollima's admirable *Dernier face à face*, where such a mechanism – 'I see, therefore I am aware' – is perverted and made ridiculous by constant repetition.

7 Let us venture to say that 'the logic of sight and oversight' has a conclusion, which we are beginning to discern. A cinema giving us the evidence and the splendour of truth has long existed: the advertising film, where all truth is immediately verifiable, where one clearly *sees* the eruption of the white tornado, the softness of Krema caramel, or the most obstinate stain yielding to K2R. Most films distributed, to the extent that they are a 'development' of pre-existing material, increasingly refer to this aesthetic and create for themselves the themes and preoccupations it allows (the 'rise to consciousness' in the twin forms of advertising and propaganda). The undeniable beauty of the 'Salador' advertisements (Pirès and Grimblat), the leap forward they constitute for advertising in the extreme care and precision of their work, should here and now stir big business into seeing that such a talent is not dissipated on pseudo-films. So, instead of pretending to shoot a dramatic scene with Montand in the Congo (*Vivre pour vivre*), Lelouch should be singing the praises of a brand of denims, Melville of a style in raincoats.

8 Besides, it would be curious to see how far what since the war we have called 'modern' cinema has consisted of merely conferring a new *dignity* on these despised but already existing marginal forms, through a sort of regressive hypostasis of which painting has already provided an example. Not just advertising, but also 'coming attractions', film titles, amateur films, etc.

9 If cinema involves photology, then every film, if it cannot control it, is controlled by it. And if it cannot manage to control photology, let film (prisoner of the light) designate it at least, let it be aware of the extent to which the world is 'deeper than the day imagines'. This involves two discoveries which, despite their extreme simplicity, are nevertheless shocking because they clearly reveal what there has been a wish to hide: that there is no innocence in the 'real', or in technique, that cinema is not simply a relation to the visual but, at a deeper level, a fundamental complicity and constantly reasserted play between two *modes* of visibility.

10 First mode. Everything that can and is to be filmed (the profilmic material) thereby has an LCD (Lowest Common Denominator) – its

visibility. What happens, for example, in *Freaks*? The problem Browning seems to pose is resolved from the outset. From the moment the monsters can share a shot with men, they are no longer truly monsters; what unites them with men is stronger than what separates them (so much so that Browning has to reintroduce monstrosity at the same time as – and through – the fiction). Cinema is a dangerous machine to tame; it provides differences, but only within a more fundamental *resemblance*.

11 On the subject of that resemblance, it was the discovery of the great film-makers of the classical age (those who recognized it and took it over: Hawks, Browning, Lubitsch, undoubtedly; certainly Ford and Renoir). In wanting to confront the most varied men and worlds within the same space, indeed the same shot, in wanting to have the play/pleasure of this exacerbated diversity (and their whole art consists in rendering the firmness of distinctions), they inevitably achieved the reverse effect – a solidarity apparently automatically there to the eye of the camera, rather like the complicity of a theatre company which, when the curtain falls on the illusory spectacle of its disunity, experiences a deeper sense of unity.

12 For spectacle is clearly what it is about for those lovers of 'small worlds', reproduced from film to film, *diversity offered in the form of spectacle, thus (slyly) denied*. But it is a spectacle as yet imperfect, owing too much to the theatre, and which it should have been possible to liberate. Perhaps now we can interpret the break that Rossellini's work appeared to make directly after the war. He did not so much oppose the classical cinema as destroy it by assuming its ultimate consequences – by making the spectacle the deepest level, by *generalizing* it. Suddenly everything, from the obscene to the insignificant, was set at the same level (bringing up the concomitant problems of morality – the point about tracking shots[3] – and commercial failure). Cinema is by nature a leveller.

13 Second mode. Everything that *has been* filmed (every shot) possesses as a result an LCD (another mode of visibility, not now visibility in general but the specific visibility of the cinema). The question here is the insertion of what has been filmed at some moment on the strip of film, its limitation by framing and duration, both equally irrevocable. While the first mode allowed 'something' to be inscribed on the screen, the second makes possible the transitivity and facilitation of meaning, via an attribute common, beyond all divergences, to all shots, and one which recently has been constantly and frenziedly referred to. The issue is no longer just the twofold spatial and temporal limitation of any shot (a limitation played on by all those wanting to write with images from the standpoint of meaning). It is also, now above all, the fact of being inscribed on that material base, of being just one instance of the only rule of cinema – the vertical unrolling of the strip of celluloid, with or without images.

14 Observation. It is not saying much to say that such proofs (that the 'presence' of something on the screen and the possibility of meaning happen in a sense automatically, thus shockingly) have been obscured because they were too obvious to be really thought about; the history of

cinema has perhaps been the continual refusal to want to know anything about it. A denial which is only possible through *reduplication*: film-makers had willingly to repeat effects they strongly suspected they could just as well do without. To the inadequate presence (inadequate because obtained without work or worth) they have continuously opposed a strategy which privileged and emphasized the actor and the decor, a four-square presence of which MacMahonism was only a belated theorization. To the imperfect meaning (diffuse, multiple meaning: *Untersinn*) they opposed an intended meaning, taken over by an *écriture* in which the reason for any passage from A to B had itself to be represented, even if under the mask of a lack (cf. 'La Suture').[4]

15 In what way has the cinema been suspect until now? On what has the suspicion rested? Always or almost always on the technique of the 'take', in the sense of capture or rape, in which some 'adamic' reality, which asked only to speak of itself, was to be manipulated. So an increasingly invisible and candid camera had to cover its tracks, because filming is never anything but seeing, and seeing plainly. The only question not asked was: *what* is being manipulated? And does something which is looked at innocently become innocent *for that reason*? Or rather, does not the look become so much more threatening because the objects looked at are chosen from among the most cultural, those heavy with meaning and saturated with ideology? In this sense *cinéma-vérité* (as Reichenbach[5] envisaged it) joins the star system; or better, is its survival.

16 It is (yet another) banality to say that everything which comes into the camera's field does not for that reason stop belonging to other fields. What is going to be filmed has always *already* been filmed. As for the images with which we continue to fill our heads, we have to admit that their referent is now hardly a 'reality' which we have experienced, but rather an imaginary experience we have already had from seeing these images in other films, the habit formed by their spectacle. Every tracking shot of a man walking down a street doesn't make me attach to it my own experience of walking, however rich it is, but rather a series of memories from *Sunrise* to *La Punition*, which should no doubt be called the 'concrete imaginary'. For the film-freak generation which has buried itself in the *cinémathèques*, can death be anything but the effect of falling bodies on the screen?

17 There is hardly any problem more serious for new film-makers. And it is no accident that the most talented of them are, indeed, former critics and film-buffs, no longer unaware that cinema has become – besides a (specific) culture and tradition in the history of the specular – an increasingly lively eye and an increasingly failing memory. Reducing the world to a generalized spectacle is the business of television. Cinema's survival is now the extent to which it can introduce 'play' into a general sense of image saturation. That play consists of delaying as long as possible (a few seconds is enough) the takeover of the seen by the already-seen, and so of showing something never-seen – at least on the screen. Among these

last rounds are exoticism, pornography, possibly science fiction. The only essential is to reinvest all the problems posed by the film's total meaning (the sequence of shots) into the unique and crucial problem of the *reading of the shot,* its decoding (what is it?). The future of cinema? To take seriously, in every sense, its figurative nature. At least one film (*2001*), where the camera starts at the level of primates and ends alongside McLaren,[6] made its acknowledged subject the future of representation.

18 Unless, that is, a cinema which seeks to be self-critical, not content with this flight forward and this need for the never-seen which can only exhaust itself unsatisfied, already clearly sees a signified (which will need to be forced into the open, indicated) in each profilmic signifier. Its relation to photology would be its particular way of accusing or not accusing the false innocence of the 'real', a reality which for it is always simply the already-filmed. We see here the two modes of visibility at work: the specific means of the second (framing and duration) as an interrogation and deconstruction of the material furnished by the first (shooting). A text no longer concealing its pretext, *a pretext suspected in turn.* Furthermore, a film's relation to photology can appear in (at least) three forms, according to whether it presupposes the profilmic material to be

- neutral
- neutralized
- neither.

The first form is represented by all films (the great majority) which, under the guise of objectivity, remain within the ideology (which they reassert without necessarily recognizing) and soon lapse into advertising. 'Salador' is to date an unsurpassed expression of this kind of cinema.

19 The second form warrants further explanation. Suspected of equivocating, the technique of shooting had logically to be thought capable of 'transfiguring', 'transmuting' the profilmic material (and in so doing, of neutralizing its effects). This is a quasi-magical operation, ecstatically evoked, an alchemy in which the profilmic lead is changed into filmed gold, autonomous grains and fragments owing nothing thereafter to their pretext, their ordering and sequence permitting the facilitation of meaning. All 'cinematography' needed such a postulate (and, as we know, it was Bresson who theorized the need: 'For film, the theme is, in my view, a pretext for creating cinematic content'). What was it he needed? To believe in the exchange value of shots, so that nothing in shot A is lost or damaged when a transition to shot B is secured. And *transition* is certainly the issue here – *neume*[7] and absolute transitivity, moving on by conserving, capitalizing.

20 Who are those who wanted to write with images? It is time we realized that such a wish, so often formulated, was only formulated by those (from Eisenstein to Bresson) who scorned ideas that were not *idées fixes,* of the order of obsessions (sexual, no doubt) and fantasies, such that only a unique and terrorist discourse could take them on. These were the great obsessionals who demanded the most from cinema: that a film should say

only one thing, achieve just one effect, but decisively. These pioneers saw to what extent the thing could not work as soon as they were convinced that in the cinema – as elsewhere – *every effect is achieved once only*. Was Hawks (or Lubitsch) preoccupied with anything else? The important thing for Hawks, the only effect he wished to produce (pleasure in/for itself), is also the easiest to achieve (even in the deceptive and metaphorical form of Adventure), as it is the quickest to be erased. Hawks is the film-maker of an always total pleasure (not matter how dull and lacklustre) with no option than to repeat it endlessly (the importance of repetition in Hawks is well known) because it is never achieved.

21 Every effect is achieved only once – but it must not be achieved too soon or it will be attenuated and forgotten; only a repetition can reactivate it, without, however, enriching it. From this we can see the deceptive side of the Hawksian (or Lubitschian) world, because achieving the same effect a second time requires an ever-increasing expenditure of energy, a world destined for exhaustion and entropy, with no other aim than its own prolongation. Film-makers with an aim (a desire) also know that there is only *one* moment appropriate for the decisive effect (cf. the Bertheau episode in *La Vie est à nous*[8]). These are therefore the film-makers of the *snare*, since their problem is to capitalize on secondary effects, ceaselessly investing signifieds in new signifiers and making themselves masters of a chain where nothing allows the end to be envisaged, masters of a frenetic transitivity which condemns them to say nothing real, never to come to a stop, were they not flagged down by the actual, material end of the film, and obliged to finish it before *it* is finished (a new duplication of an inevitable and automatic effect). It is surely in Lang's films that we can best see this reluctance to conclude and the very edgy humour which presides over what are always *simulated* endings (*Secret Beyond the Door*). In the cinema also, to write means not to finish.

22 This incompatibility between a film which cannot exceed a certain duration and a meaning which can be reasserted by a trifle gave rise to compromise solutions which all took the form of *coups de force*, the only thing which could end the chain, capitalize on its links and reactivate them in the direction of a prediction of the past. In this one can recognize the major concern of several celebrated films which seemed modern to their defenders in *Cahiers* around 1955: miracle films or, as Jacques Rivette rightly observed, films of the *final reversal*, which managed to represent *simultaneously* the most advanced state of reflection on the cinema and an often religious way of accounting for that reflection. Why? Because such a power (the intransitive power of writing) could only be sustained by introducing a guarantee, a transcendental signified which cinema had gradually to learn to do without, leaving it to advertising films for which it has always been the truth ('Salador').

23 One man bewitched by these powers very soon recognized that he could hardly avoid simulating their *coups de force*, and that, by insisting on provoking them, he was all the more clearly showing them to be

arbitrary and a trick, no longer even capable of valorizing after the event a sequence of shots in which there was already revealed a radical inability to capitalize; reflection was to make of that inability a rejection, and out of that rejection has come recently a hesitant theory. . . . We are saying that Jean-Luc Godard, when he was filming *Vivre sa vie*, was thinking of Karina as, he imagined, before him Renoir thought of C. Hessling (*Nana*), Rossellini of I. Bergman (*Europa 51*), if not Fellini of G. Massina (*Cabiria*). But let Nana smile, dance, sell her body or die, the evidence is that a woman is always a woman and that it is an illusion to think that a film can say anything else, an illusion whose results are equally obvious in film theory (every shot is a transition, a difference of effect which is only the more decisive for being final) and in the themes treated (whores are saints, the guilty innocent, etc). All of which Godard was very aware of when he took a turning (with *Le Mépris*) from which the cinema has scarcely begun to come back.

24 *Le Mépris* (*Contempt*). In 1964, everyone wanted to know whether Godard, the *enfant terrible* of the new cinema, faced with the demands of big budget production and the whims of famous actors, would come away from the venture without losing anything, making all that profilmic machinery *in the final analysis* unrecognizable. At the time everyone was raving about the magic of cinema and the genius of the *auteur*, the man who imprints the indelible mark of his vision on everything and everyone. While all that may have constituted a fantasy for Godard (filming at the big MGM studios), it all turns out as if he had finally decided on the impossibility, or more accurately the uninterest, of such an enterprise, which is in fact the real subject of the film. Since it is therefore the story of a failure (and itself a commercial failure), *Le Mépris* becomes a question of knowing whether failure is not perhaps more profound than any success. That is, is it not the demiurges who fail?

25 What happens in *Le Mépris*? Still the same story – *getting there too late*, the game already played, where the score is settled and the cards have a fixed value and way of playing them. What is the point of playing the best possible hand, smuggling in meaning between the lines, when the game is already over? Homer wrote the *Odyssey* and Moravia wrote *Contempt*. Prokosch wanted to put it into images and Ponti wanted to put it on the screen. They summoned famous 'artists' (Lang, Godard) whose (commercial) thirst for being scorned they were able to slake. ('One has to suffer,' says Lang, and everyone knows that Godard had to shoot things he had not foreseen.) Every new player of this great Culture and Capital game has to respect (and not reflect upon) the traces in his work of what came before him, and which he should not improve upon. Choosing the place (Capri), the story (the *Odyssey*), and the characters (Lang, Bardot) closest to myth, Godard discovered what he was later to elucidate constantly: that you can't *both use and be used by* that profilmic material. You deny it, believing you are going beyond it, but you ignore it without

going beyond it. It is time, more modestly, to indicate its *overdetermination* for what it is. Every film is a palimpsest.

Serge Daney

2 Fantasy

It is hardly saying anything today to say that a film is made to be read (which presupposes a postulate that it is written, or, in a more clearly normative sense, that it has to be written). For, having said this, one must inevitably hypostasize, beyond what is there to be read, a reader's knowledge, an ideology of reading. This is not so much because of the state of the conceptual apparatus adopted to analyse the object as because of the *position* taken up before the object that is being looked at, the object of vision. In that it is linked to an ideology of the visible which produced it and which conditions us, it is legitimate to ask of that object whether it, more than any other, is destined to remain what it has always been, an object of misrecognition. (This not without glossing over the question of what idealist impasse we should be locking ourselves into today by rejecting the visible.)

The object still slips away, and the frenetic, unfathomable reading which attempts to grasp effects of recognition and meaning from it usually means merely acquiescing in the vertigo of the ungraspable, practising a reading which at best manages to stabilize itself into a recognition of mannerisms and themes. But it conceals from us the foundations of the text, of the object; this automatically elicits a textual reading, but one whose *signifier* we should be hard put to locate, since it is everywhere and nowhere, masked by the evidence of the vision of the thing, the *filmic object*, the projected image, whose only status today is the unreality of something else (except in the so-called minor genres, like animated films).

Such a reading is thus perhaps the last and not the least (for it allows the tying of a maximum number of threads) ruse of the ideology in which and, increasingly, for which that impossible object, the film, is produced: made to be looked at by a spectator who reduces his knowledge about the object to his vision of the object, who bases his knowledge on his vision, and does not want to know anything about it, lost as he is in his *jouissance*.

It remains to be said that the experience of that vision and of all the *jouissances* it procures, was no doubt necessary in order to understand what has always been at issue in the cinema: that ideology was not just there where one saw it or thought it (in the figures, the discourse, the 'space' of the discourse), it was also there where it could not be seen, *in the place from which it was seen*.

At issue, that is, in a phantasmagoria in which a particular cinema (but also all cinema perhaps) installed the spectator.

At issue as a phantasm. One may ponder the thought that the only cultural object of the last half century or more which has gained our acceptance has not been this spectacle, but rather the doubly imaginary place where it spoke, addressing a spectator who was the *metteur en scène* of his own fantasy, installed by the apparatus of phantasmagoria in the place we have tried to define (in 'Suture'[9]): the sphere of absence.

What now has to be done, shadowy and necessarily repetitive though the work is, is to show:
- how this apparatus was set in place;
- how it was able to perpetuate itself, misrecognized;
- how it could be recognized.

That is:
- what kind of object, with what structural properties, was so produced;
- with what fictions, what myths and what *jouissance* it was then able to conceal the fantasy involved;
- and meanwhile what scriptural practice it was able to incubate, as its symptom; and what practice is open to it today within a society which is clearly not about to renounce its ideology, even if it appears to renounce (provisionally?) objects which could *directly* procure its *jouissance*, like the classical cinema. (But to enjoy [*jouir*] the ideology, to fantasize the subject – the paranoid subject – as one does in cinema, is to represent, on a particular scene, its cinematic fiction, effects which denounce that ideology much too precisely to avoid being sooner or later *repressed*. Hence the need for the most rigorous suspicion of the cinema's renunciation of traditional forms, and to ask *what exactly it is that has been baulked in this way*.)

We must not forget that cinema was a popular art, and certainly not because of any misunderstanding. If it has now ceased to be popular, or even if it still is (through a real misunderstanding), this is not only because it has renounced an ideal ideological form, so to speak; it is also perhaps because its producers quickly came to realize that it could not survive without being given the external markings of an aesthetic object, because the demand and the audience had changed, because cinema had urgently to become a class object, having over forty years exhausted all its fantasies and all the resources of imaginary treasure inherited from the nineteenth century, which it had been continuously reinvesting, from Feuillade to Hitchcock, and under cover of which it had been able to say most things about this world between the lines (to the extent that it was a cinema of neurosis, all classical cinema originating in a neurotic sublimation).

To avoid falling into the opposite trap, we should say that while cinema was an object dedicated to transmitting ideology, it was also of all cultural objects the one which best pointed up the symptomatic face of ideology, and thus the *most compromised* in what ideology had to cover up. And perhaps there was nothing less ideological than this cinema of paranoia, which directly engaged the symptoms of our times, even if it only ever registered them at the level of *subject*.

The recuperation took place later, for ends which were not at all neurotic; while what had become and later been consecrated as the Seventh

Art increasingly confined itself to its aestheticism, in order to produce, as it does today, all the semblances of *écriture*, which it did by means of a regressive hypostasis (also perhaps symptomatic of the revolution it nevertheless dreams of accomplishing by genuinely becoming a visible *écriture*), placing it in a position somewhat close to painting, on which it sometimes consciously bases itself as an aesthetic guarantee of:

- the artist and his style, his genius with images, his infallible eye, his supreme touch (the relation between shooting and touch, camera movement and design);
- the object as a scale model, a scale model of *écriture* by which aesthetic modernism has always been recognized (in painting Vasarely as compared to Mondrian, or Miró as compared to Klee; in cinema it would be, for example, *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* as compared to the films of Lelouch); and increasingly what might be called *degraded replicas of what the great old films have almost always been, scale models of the social whole*, producing a representation of the world, supposedly the creator's interior world, where everything has a place; and even a scale model of the political situation, like the films of Jancsó. In other words, dead ends and symptoms at the same time (the desperate effort of a society which is torn apart to make a success of at least the fiction of its structural cohesion); and perhaps it is this that criticism should think through as a priority, the means by which the recuperation of the scale model is realized – a model which, while it had always had an aesthetic vocation, could not fail to become a standard ideological object whose perception or immediate readability was best equipped to eclipse the structure and the montage which produced it.

And as a visible object, entering the great family of the Visible, cinema could not avoid becoming an *écriture*. But an occulted *écriture*. A locus where the spectator's (and the film-maker's) resistance to *écriture* had to be strongest.

The spectator continually experiences the (perhaps insupportable) paradox of an analogical representation which is also *écriture*, a continuum (projection) which is also discontinuous (montage). This is what we were pointing to in 'Suture', adopting the point of view of the spectator representing to himself the process of his impossible reading, divided as he is between the recognition of what is figured on the screen and the interpretation of the relations between the figures, and above all fascinated by the irreal offered in the form of an image that has been called assertive, but whose assertive character has scarcely been understood as being dependent on the reader's fantasy. For if the image in cinema is assertive and the profilmic object has a specific being-there (cf. Barthes) at its disposal, it is in order to be there for someone who is none other than the double of the spectator divided between his reading and his *jouissance*, and in order to signify something for that absent one (cf. the minimal definition Lacan gives for the sign: that which represents something for *someone*).

In posing the fourth wall as the place from which the image is designated as signifying by an invisible indicator, the spectator is representing for himself his demand for a *guarantee*, not only of meaning, but of the *signifier* (that is, of *a discontinuity in the real presupposing a system in place*), and does so in the face of the last thing capable of having the status of a signifier. And the ambiguous work of the cinema of suture has been to give him that guarantee at every instant, while bringing to its conclusion the enterprise of sanctifying the visual which the representational arts had merely broached; at the same time it *short-circuited at a stroke* (without thinking through) *the work of a whole culture of the eye* which had given access to the rank of signifier to all visible things – forms, colours, materials (increasingly 'inconspicuous' in painting).

It did this by inventing a prodigious apparatus – the setting in place of the locus of the fantasy, and the *écriture* of the fantasy of a locus. An *écriture* immediately dedicated to a dead end: the obvious, irrefutable presence of the filmed object and the guarantee that it did involve a signifier (articulated to other signifiers) could not be obtained by the spectator in the continuous filming which finally became the dream of that cinema, inasmuch as the presence and guarantee had to be supported by the look of an Absent One, and the object had to have frequent connections with its field. Moreover, the spectator wanted *proof* of the existence of that Absent One at every moment; and, it goes without saying, *proof through vision*.

The apparatus involved a complicity between director and spectator which could not be sustained for long but which, for one instant, was total, the director maintaining his status as Master of the representation which society has always made for itself of the relation between the real and the representation (its imaginary). A completely detached relation, running parallel with a representation of the relation between artist and signifier in which the classical cinema gave the spectator a share in the form of a simulacrum. So for the director, absolute mastery; for the spectator, the limitless *jouissance* of a transcendental signified, a hypostatized visible presence.

All this is necessarily linked to a particular syntagmatic structure, and to the rhetoric of an endlessly renewed causality which has managed to turn the spectator into someone obsessed with meaning, haunted by the slightest hiatus, the slightest suspension, the slightest disjunction between cause and effect (sure too, and this doubles his pleasure, of its being compensated later when the discourse is concatenated).

It was thus an essentially theological cinema, aimed at a profoundly religious spectator, in the sense used by Lacan – the one who leaves the Other (God, the Artist, the Absent One) in charge of cause, demanding from him the guarantee of a meaning which is not supposed to be produced by any scriptural work, proceeding directly from a vision, from *a look which gives things meaning*.

A theological cinema, moreover, in that the practice of its *écriture* is drawn into giving proof of the visible by the invisible, and vice versa – a cinema of revelation, of incarnation, and of grace.

The function of this *écriture* was to transform a fantasy into fiction, a fiction into vision, the Absent One into someone, the spectator into his own double, into the stand-in of the filmed object whose presence ought to have split the screen, in order to fill a lack which was only the correlate of that presence – lack of the subject, lack of the signifier (phallus, lost object, etc.).

Jean-Pierre Oudart

3 Symptom

Let us define cinema (the cinema which supplies a representation of the real, in the sense of being faithful to the monocular representation inherited from the Quattrocento and which reproduces an object's movement at its normal speed) as an apparatus which produces:
- the most faithful analogical representation of the profilmic referent;
- a representation situated in a scenographic space at once unreal and imaginary (filmic field, fourth wall), such that the profilmic object is construed by the spectator as being there for someone, thereby signifying something for him, and so that the screen's limit serves as:
- a caesura of this unreal/imaginary double space;
- a frame within which everything that is inscribed is not only called on to signify something, but to be articulated to that global proposition which the image is called on to form and to the total meaning it is supposed to deliver by means of the effect of the imaginary subjugation of the representation to the look of another for whom total meaning is inevitable.

From this definition we see that one cannot understand anything about its effects of reading if one misrecognizes how the *subjective function* acts – the function governing a *subject subjugated to the order of the signifier.*

Given the current impossibility of taking the theorizing of these effects any further, let us say that the reading of the filmic image seems to hinge on three effects:
- *the effect of reality and of scene* (*metaphorical,* just as one can only say of a painting that it represents a scene through the effect of a metaphor which overlays the word-for-word (metonymic) connection of the forms inscribed in it). In other words a *specular effect of cognition* generating an effect of *misrecognition*[10] or covering over. (See, for comparison, what Lacan says about the *self* carrying the symptom in *fragmented* form and using it *entire* in order not to understand it.);
- *signifying effect* (the image as signifier of absence. A metonymic doubling of the subject; the image as phallus, the image as 1. A *unitary effect,* therefore, like the scene effect) bringing about the effect of a signifying total (the image as a proposition closed with its assertion);
- *the effect of lack,* correlative of the first two (absence of the subject), bringing about the vacillation of the signifying total (the image as a proposition requiring, in order to be closed, *the representation of the subject which is excluded from it*).

It is impossible to understand what the cinema represents *historically* in the history of representation, in relation to painting (or photography) or especially to theatre, if one fails to recognize that this function is in some sense there in representation and that there is certainly something in cinema which is nowhere else: *a relation between the subject and the signifier shockingly brought to light.*

For it is said that an image (for example a photograph) represents something, that one recognizes some object in it and that this representation has a meaning (in other words, that *there is a simultaneous guarantee from the real and from the signifier*). And it is difficult to see how a filmic image can be turned into something irreducibly different from a moving photograph or a 'figurative' painting by trying to account for the effect it produces in terms of experimental psychology, or by refusing to understand that for the first time in the history of the representational arts (moreover, without the film-maker knowing anything about it, but *not without his experiencing the effects*, even if nowadays he does not want to know about it, any more than the spectator) a split has appeared in the relationship between the spectator and the representation. So that the question is no longer a question of recognition and meaning, but one of interrogation: for what subject does that image fill the function of signifier, in the sense Lacan intends when he says that the signifier, in its minimal definition, can be said to be that which represents the subject (for another signifier)? And correlatively, what does that image signify whose only meaning is to represent something, be the sign for someone, signify for him absolutely (that is, constitute, impossibly, a signifying unit that admits no residue and includes a proposition closed on itself which would exhaust all its effects of meaning)?

We shall simply say for now that this question, which the spectator poses in his fantasy, has the function of *covering up something not tenable in cinema: a relation between the subject* (subject of the signifier) *and the filmic object which can only be assumed by being subjugated to the representation of a fantasy.*

Why?

First, because the luminous traces which are inscribed on the screen *without break*, while they represent figures which make sense and are usually perfectly recognizable, are not at all discrete and do not belong to the order of signifier, even though they convey signifying elements (the figures).

And second, because these figures, whose recognizable form covers those traces (but only in a projection at 'normal' speed), have only an unreal reality to set before the spectator, who cannot attribute a counterpart of *existence* to them except by making them objects or actors in his fantasy.

The effect of unity therefore depends on the spectator within this fantasy representing himself under the guise of someone for whom is signified, indeed to whom is addressed what is nevertheless addressed to no one, the figurative message whose assertive character he can only take on by fantasizing himself into the role of the addressee, misrecognizing the fact that the assertion is simply the inverted representation of his inability to sustain, as the subject of the signifier, the absolute indiscreteness of a luminous phantasmagoria, where for him to recognize something is not grounds enough for recognizing himself as, so to speak, the subject of the signifier.

The objection will be raised that in theatre the spectacle puts into play things which are no more discrete. But the theatrical spectacle is real, and while it is not discrete in terms of its scene, it functions discretely in terms of its spectator with no difficulty, because none of the subjective functions is disturbed. Whereas in cinema the spectator is confronted with an object which resembles reality only in so far as it is based on an operation which has nothing to do with normal vision and normal reading and which upsets the eclipsing function of this subject, who, lost as he is in the effort of recognizing the figures of the real in the continuity of luminous traces, is not the subject of a signifying chain but rather the subject of a hallucinatory continuum.

For the two correlative times of a normal reading (and vision) are:
- recognition; that is, perception of a difference, a discontinuity in the real ('real' meaning any percept, in this case the projection of a film);
- facilitation of meaning in the discontinuity where the signifier – the material signifying traces – can have an effect on condition that the subject is eclipsed so that meaning can arise through the suppression of the traces.

These two times may tend to be suppressed at any moment, and in the cinema there is always the risk (inherent in its very nature as a continuous projection of light) that the eclipsing function will be disrupted by the spectator's need to identify, continuously, some discontinuity in the luminous continuum he is looking at.

(It is also certain that this recognition is not a recognition of all the traces, and that the only ones recognized are those which create the effect of the already seen and whose articulation creates the effect of the already known. This is by way of a reminder of the function of misrecognition which operates in the exercise of any reading, in the cinema as elsewhere.)

Observations

1 It is certainly here that the terminology of psychoanalysis is indispensable, with regard to the spectator's fantasy whose function is to cover over something not tenable in the cinema, something which challenges the very status and structure of the spectator as the subject of the signifier; and with regard to the hallucinatory pleasure which anyone can take in cinema, whose only cause is the glimpse it gives of a fantasy access to *jouissance*, to the transgression of all discontinuity. This *jouissance* has nothing to do with either recognition or meaning; on the contrary, it arises

out of their perpetual *extreme difference*, and is guaranteed by the continuity of the projection.

In cinema we need to differentiate very precisely between recognition, effect of meaning, pleasure and *jouissance*. The pleasure (of reading) is linked to the difference of the other two and to the relative nature of their divergence (given that there is no recognition which does not give rise to some effect of meaning); *jouissance* is linked to an *absolute divergence*, possible in cinema, between recognition, reading and pleasure.

2 If cinema's problem is the status of the subject of the signifier which cannot be established as such in that phantasmagoria except as the subject of a fantasy, and if it is only through the look of another self that the spectator guarantees his status as subject of the signifier, then it is time to reveal why in the theatre such a problem does not arise: in the theatre the actor is real, he speaks, he is the real *subject* of his discourse. And from what he utters the spectator knows that what is involved is a signifier. Not just because this is speech [*parole*], but above all because it is presented by another subject of the signifier into whose role the spectator does not need to fantasize himself in order to recognize that what is said affects him, because he is himself an 'other' in that context.

3 While Langian cinema may have invented the function of the Absent One by setting it in place in its locus, we would venture to say that *sound* film did not renounce it but merely *displaced* it. We would say too that the particular *place* of cinematic criticism is not (or not exclusively) that of guarantor of the film-maker's genius (which has been the role of the literary critic), nor to anticipate the spectator's pleasure (which has long been the role of the film critic), nor to multiply that pleasure; and that therefore the place of cinematic criticism will not be fixed if one fails to recognize that it is to the critic that falls the role of answering for the signification of this thing, which always represents or signifies something, but for which to be taken literally is not enough, and which needs to be supported by someone (the fictional subject, the spectator as prey to duplication, the critic) who, through his speech, reduplicates it and makes it recognizable to another as a signifier.

4 Clearly, the whole of cinematic practice is, through its exercise, led to misrecognize these effects, *inherent in the materiality of the filmic object* (the luminous traces) and in the *spatial and temporal conditions of their manifestation* (the projection) – effects of reality and scene (the spectator's fantasy) and effects of text (the effects of fantasy on the process of recognition and reading). But to misrecognize does not mean to know nothing about them, and certainly the cinema, to the extent that it remains faithful to its analogical calling, is obliged to take up a position in relation to them. And to choose to engage with them increasingly assumes that the problems they raise will not only have been posed but in one way or another resolved, as a preliminary to any practice.

Jean-Pierre Oudart

4 Scenes

For all that it was considered within an ideology of transparence and meaning (just as there is no deviation in the act of seeing, there is no difference betwen seeing and knowing), this cinema, articulated by a double scene, cinema of the visible and the invisible, of the look and the thing looked at (or designated as *mise en scène*), has *none the less* held a continuous discourse – at least as far as its inventors were concerned – on the question that mattered to it: the *sign*.

For the sign (the object, the trace) always poses a problem in these films, as the signifier of something invisible, whose unmasking is delayed (disjunction of cause and effect), but which ends up sooner or later achieving reality, by being incarnated in a fiction which always poses a twofold question:

- Where does the sign come from? (*Mabuse*)
- What is it a sign of? (Hitchcock).

If this cinema thus always poses the profilmic object (which can be, and generally is, the most ordinary kind of object) as the signifier of something else, something radically other which it can signify in a completely arbitrary way, this is because the question – unthought, or merely rendered through a (detective-story or psychoanalytic) metaphor – is that of the *signifier* and the 'locus' of the signifier. The principal question posed by this cinema, indeed the only question, is that of the barred subject. It is not, then, as its ideology would have us believe, a question of the subject as cause and absolute master of his knowledge (a direct knowledge that can be obtained merely by seeing clearly), but rather as a radically decentred subject, *master of his misrecognition*, or of a half-knowledge masking another truth.

Hence the conception of a visible thing as the sign of an invisible one, a light that masks its source, a trace of the invisible inscribed over the visible (the real, that is, since this cinema ideologically asserts that real = visible), innocently set down in the everyday (Hitchcock).

Thus one sees the enormous presupposition this cinema is founded upon, but equally the paradox it is engaged in, since the real (visible) world is not at all concerned or at issue in the inscription, reading and elucidation of these signs (materials and objects abstracted from the real).

Which is to say that this cinema is founded on the most radical misrecognition (which in itself has clearly made it an agent of ideology) of any relation between the real (the concrete reality) and the imaginary (the 'world' of representation, the concrete imaginary).[11]

Of course, this misrecognition existed before the cinema, but was based on something entirely different: on a conception of *écriture* (for literature) and on a 'poetic' tradition (for painting), which for a long time ensured that fiction and (literary, pictorial) representation were seen as abstracted from any reference to reality, as signifying not the real, but the tradition (the museum) in which they immediately took their place and which finally became their only model and their unique referent.

This ideology was reasserted on the level of fantasy with the coming of cinema, but it reached a dead end. For if cinematic fiction has nothing to do with a reality which it nevertheless claims to invest without transforming (by reproducing it analogically), and if film's visibility abolishes all divergence between the real and the representation, how could cinema avoid compromising the autonomy of that representation? Why is there that security in seeing things 'as they are in life' without being affected by them in the same way, while at the same time attributing to them a fantasy presence, indeed even a truth that they would not otherwise have? Why that dimension of truth attributed to filmic vision which mystical spectators, critics and film-makers have never ceased to count on?

The answer is that cinema came into being in a culture which had long made the theatre the locus of a real representation with the least relation to the real, the mystical locus of an incarnation and a speech which succeeds in sublimating an *écriture* transmuted into voice, existing only in a cycle of speech (made to be spoken, obeying a rigorously linear model). In other words, the hypostasis of a real presence and a full speech which magically proposes a contiguity of the real figure (the actor) with the imaginary referent (the hero), something the cinema had no difficulty in reasserting since the being-there of its object and the transparence of the image invited it to do so.

The fact that this presence is the effect of the spectator's fantasy sustained by the apparatus of a *mise en scène* which simply makes use of both the *mode of recording* the image (relation between camera and object) and its *mode of reception* (the projector, the film theatre, the screen) is sufficient indication of the point to which cinema has merely reasserted the theatre's scenographic apparatus; an apparatus guaranteeing it a maximum of the presence (lacking, despite everything) with which it has long concealed the materiality of its image.

The fact that the cinema always orients itself towards more of the 'real' can only be explained, therefore, by its need both to conceal the materiality of projection ('the image') and to guarantee the character the maximum existence, to keep perfecting its *écriture* of verisimilitude.

What we shall need to show is, on the one hand, that the ideology of the theatre as a locus of incarnation and a full speech addressed to the community has been reinvested and transformed in the cinema in an obsessional mode; and, on the other hand, that the actor's existence has been much more than a means of the fiction, indeed it is its nodal point. For in all these fictions, it is the *question of existence* which is posed (begetting, eroticism, death). Thus, originally at least, the cinema's production of the being-there of the actor, by its very action, literally intersects with the question of existence, of begetting. The passage from one shot to another and one place to another (through a door) is, for Lang, much more than a means of creating credibility – it is a means of signifying the existence of the character. For this cinema, very logically, poses a fact which is forgotten when one is face to face with a film, but which always seems disturbing when the process fails: that existing depends on being born, is a question of *issue* and nothing else, so that being in a shot implies having come from somewhere else, from another, original, place, and this is what this cinema never stops wanting to show us in its fantasy.

So the great force of this cinema was not, as it imagined, its transparence and its contiguity to the real, but rather its anchorage in the obsessional. The true referent of this cinema was almost never primarily the real, but the imaginary.

It was sometimes, as with Lang, even a directly filmed fantasy that subsequently generated the cinematography.

But to the extent that the film-maker's obsessional discourse was not just enacted but also inscribed in the *écriture* of his film, it sooner or later had to happen that not only had the filmed object to be invested with another signification – become a signifier in a chain to be revealed in another scene – but the *image* too had to end up becoming the signifier of something else (not directly the image as a luminous trace, but the image as representing a thing, a place, invested with a hidden meaning); in other words, *the representation becomes the global signifier of something else.* This is the inevitable result of setting in operation a syntax of the look and the thing looked at, a subjective *écriture* which needed only the slightest distortion (when suddenly no one from the fourth wall answers for the meaning of the thing) for its whole system to collapse, *for the signifier no longer to be the object in the image, but the whole image.* Which is what happened quite soon with Lang and Hitchcock.

First, an image signifying what? Nothing, the absence of the subject or the presence of the master, whose fantasy suspends the discourse, breaks its transitivity and introduces an intolerable *play* into the fiction. It was actually in terms of suspense and play that these directors initially posed their transgression. However, in their latest films (*The Tiger of Bengal, Marnie*), and within the framework of a system where this was inconceivable, the image itself does indeed end up, for Lang, representing what the object had at first signified (the phallus), by its very emptiness and lack (cf. the last image of *Moonfleet*); and for Hitchcock, even more strangely, it is charged with directly producing the figuration of the fantasy.

But immediate downfall comes with renouncing the apparatus of the double scene invented by the cinema, which could only mean the disappearance of the *écriture* of the fantasy, *since the place of the subject* (the director) *was no longer there.*

As a result, two things collapsed around the same time: first, a conception of filmic transparence and subjective cinema which paradoxically supported its ideology of both presence and meaning, and second, an *écriture* which at this point can be said to represent the only genuine textual practice achieved by the cinema. The filmic object was thus left to the contradictions in which today's cinema is more or less floundering (meanwhile practising an unfathomable *écriture* which merely reflects those contradictions passively). It is left to be both *of the order of the image* (joining the family of images, after painting and photography) and the analogical representation of the real, thus to be swamped by the superabundance of referents. Cinematographic *écriture* will one day have to stop consisting of continuously playing off these referents against each other, or else it will no longer be able to *express* anything except the suspicion that weighs on the image today when it stops being the real in order to become a stereotype, a sort of deceptive representation. (It is significant that the reaction against classical cinema turned not so much on the place made for the subject and the ideology invested in its hero as on its typical outlines and characteristics, a reaction which has given rise to a *purely specular* criticism. And at the same time, with Godard, the advertising stereotype invaded the cinema, as if to exorcize, in an equally specular manner, its own specular attraction.) The image thus becomes a sign (to the extent that its relation to reality is now completely diverted by its relation to all other stereotypes and all other iconic messages) which film-makers no longer dare use except by designating it as belonging to an 'other', to the cinema (culture, the common weal) or to the enemy (the industry, bourgeois ideology).

It might be said that this inhibition on the part of the film-maker is overdetermined by several factors, which we shall simply list here:

1 The film-maker's recognition of his *real masters* (the image industry, the system of distribution, etc.).

An economic factor which generates a deliberately humorous and masochistic attitude towards his material, the *signifier* (image) at his disposal. (We are schematizing.)

2 A factor at once aesthetic and ideological: the admission and refusal (but also often the temptation) of *his own past mastery* (because it is not overstating things to say that the old directors were masters, even and especially if their mastery covered up the gravest misrecognitions, the most serious repressions – indeed, as in the case of Lang, real foreclosures. These directors attained absolute mastery over all the filmic effects that have been referred to, the spectator's fantasy, the actor's presence, meaning, etc.).

3 A very complex factor whose political aspect will emerge as it is made more precise: the knowledge (which obliges us to question classical cinema from this angle: how was a film-maker allowed such mastery? Which manifest discourse(s) did he hold that justified such a privilege? There is no ready response, except for those who have given up on the question) *that any mastery can only advance under a mask, only produce its discourse under the mask of play*. (In this perspective, the whole discourse of classical cinema has already been produced under such a mask; hence, for example, the significantly paradoxical title bestowed on Hitchcock – 'master of suspense' – and also the final intrusion in a political film like

La Vie est à nous of a fiction in which the *as-if-by-chance* rule abruptly resumes its rights, at the risk of compromising the film's thesis. Inversely, moreover, it is the political discourse which poses its meaning as a play that allows, even indirectly, an admission of the greatest rhetorical mastery – for example, Jancsó.)

The opposite is verifiable too. When Bresson says that the cinema will become a kind of psychoanalysis, especially when he imagines that his films are made out of surprises (in the shooting), he is falling into the trap of an admission of alleged non-mastery; for what determines for him the passage from one shot to another is never the exercise of a *work* which could be called psychoanalytic, but rather that of a *knowledge* (generally, moreover, concealing an *idée fixe*) which, as such, masters (represses) any possibility of such work.

The knowledge in question is that of knowing that such a cause produces such an effect, such a gesture provokes such a look, etc.

This is not said in order to raise questions about the few attempts at mastery currently emerging in film (although it will be necessary to do so at some point, but initially on an ideological and political level, by examining how this mastery is deployed), because without the application of a new mastery, new forms, new fictional structures, cinema will probably survive (how long?) only in aesthetic objects which reassert indefinitely the textual formulas that have passed as revolutionary (like *Méditerranée*, which we like). These films are revolutionary in fact, if one reduces the practice of a revolutionary *écriture* to the internal deconstruction of a myth, and to the seductive and delightfully awesome effects of the polysemic liberation that results.

Today the cinema has reached a dead end which has caused it to produce a kind of suicidal specular reflection, and these texts are aware of being very directly in thrall to a reflection on that reflection. A film like *Partner* demonstrates this in exemplary fashion, as it does the manifestation of a new symptom with which we shall perhaps be increasingly confronted – the return of what was repressed in all this obsessional cinema. *The return of everything its mastery repressed*, which, in this film and others, has come to occupy the foreground of the scene. A scene which is not simply aesthetic, but which also seeks to be political.

Jean-Pierre Oudart
Translated by Diana Matias

Notes

1 Nietzsche, *Complete Works*, ed. Oscar Levy, vol. x, *The Joyful Wisdom*, trans. Thomas Common, London, 1910. (Translator's note.)

2 For an expansion and development of this argument, see Jean-Louis Comolli, 'Ideology of the Visible', in Teresa de Laurentis and Stephen Heath (eds), *The Cinematic Apparatus*, London, Macmillan, 1980.

3 A reference to Luc Moullet's celebrated dictum, 'Morality is a question of

tracking shots'. See Ch. 20 in Volume 1, and Jean-Luc Godard's variation, 'Tracking shots are a question of morality', in the discussion 'Hiroshima, notre amour', Ch. 6 in Volume 1.

4 Ch. 2 in this volume.

5 François Reichenbach: documentary film-maker known particularly for *L'Amérique insolite* (1960) and *Un Coeur gros comme ça* (1961).

6 Norman McLaren, whose experimental animation films often used the technique of drawing or painting directly on the film negative.

7 *Neume*: a notational symbol in early music, indicating a group of notes sung on one breath, here of course used figuratively.

8 See Ch. 4 (section I.3.1) in this volume.

9 Ch. 2 in this volume.

10 'Misrecognition': a term from Jacques Lacan indicating the tendency in the subject, rooted in the 'mirror stage', to identify himself with the image of the other; hence, more generally, the subject's misunderstanding of his relation to the real.

11 In this account, derived from Lacan, the subject's relation to cinema is founded on the psychoanalytic (Lacanian) concept of misrecognition. The subject is caught up in a world of images ('the Imaginary') and so fails to recognize 'the real'. The Imaginary is one of the three essential orders composing the psychoanalytic field, including the 'Real' and 'Symbolic'. The 'Symbolic' is the order of social language and of intersubjectivity. For a detailed explication of these relations see Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, *Language and Materialism*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977, Chapter 6, 'On the subject of Lacan'. See also Anthony Wilden, 'Lacan and the Discourse of the Other' in his *The Language of the Self*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968.

8

Jean-Pierre Oudart: 'Word Play, Master Play'

('Jeux de mots, jeux de maître', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 223, August–September 1970)

1 What makes up a fiction like *Tristana*? The articulation of several theological and 'bourgeois' propositions, blasphemous and erotic. Thus, schematically:
(a) the Virgin is pure/Tristana (a respectable young girl) is without desire; God (the ideal Father) has no phallus[1]/the bourgeoisie does not want to know anything of desire;
(b) the Virgin must be possessed/ Tristana does desire; the Father has a phallus/Don Lope has a knowledge of desire.
2 A motherless orphan, Tristana (the Virgin) is adopted by an old uncle (the Father) who immediately seduces her.

The character Don Lope is inscribed in the fiction as an omnipotent and omniscient subject; this is clearly enough indicated by the episode of the handbag thief whom Don Lope hides from his pursuers, and even more clearly by the fact – which cannot be understood any other way – that Tristana's adventure with the painter is very quickly inscribed, fictionally, as his fantasy. Don Lope creates theatre. Inversely and reciprocally, Tristana fantasizes about Don Lope, dreaming that she sees his severed head instead of the bell-clapper, and in her management of her affair with the painter treating Don Lope as a husband she is cuckolding for a lover she moreover refuses to marry, following the lesson in Sadean reciprocity which Don Lope gave her: that she should give to the other only the same freedom she gives to her own desire.
3 What is made of the articulation of the propositions we set out in (1) in the first part of *Tristana*, up to the departure of the heroine? The blasphemy comes true: Don Lope abandons his role of Father (ideally castrated) and possesses the Virgin. But the role of scene-setter (God the Father) which the fiction assigns him is very soon revealed as a correlative of the representation of his impotence: Tristana prefers another man, one who scoffs at him. Tristana's return sets in motion a symmetrical repetition of the action of the first part. Don Lope intercedes with the painter to persuade

him to provide Tristana with the pleasure he is too old to give her; Don Lope then marries her in a religious ceremony (cancelling out the fault and denying the blasphemy) and soon sinks into bigotry (return to order), the reappearance of his severed head in the bell-tower triggering the scene of his death in Tristana's fantasy.

4 What results from this repetition of the same scenes in the two panels of the fiction? Revelation of the logic governing the relation between their propositions, through their transformations and through the structural (syntactic) constancy deducible from their regulated repetition and transformation. First comes the confirmation that Don Lope's knowledge of desire (and above all of Tristana's desire) is a correlative of his exclusion from the field of that desire and of his impotence to sustain or arouse it. He is a castrated director, and the development of the blasphemous proposition (the ideal Father has a phallus) serves to produce him as such, in order to be denied in the representation (and to resurface in Tristana's dream of the severed head in the bell-tower). This castrated director, doubled by a figure of blasphemy, is not produced in the abstract but in that Catholic and bourgeois fictional setting which Buñuel likes so much. In the first part of the film Don Lope is a ruined landowner waiting to inherit from his sister; in the second part (his sister having died) he is a rich man buying back the silverware he had to sell and maintaining Tristana in luxury. In the first part, Tristana is a poor young girl; in the second, a rich but crippled woman ostentatiously distributing her wealth to charities. And Buñuel sets the double privilege (rank/money) of his two characters in play against each other by linking them to their respective infirmities (impotence/being crippled). Don Lope is poor, an anarchist, but has a servant (or rather two, Tristana soon becoming an object of his social/sexual privilege); then he is rich, respectable (married), but impotent (rejected). Tristana is poor and desired as a servant; then she is rich, enjoys bourgeois respectability, etc.

5 But these obvious equivalences do not exhaust the reading of the film. A reading which is constantly deflected from its course by the fact that, while these equivalences delineate the social/sexual circumstances of the fictional characters, the scenes (and the images) in which they are inscribed enclose them in a representation that continually perverts them. What produces the perversion is the inscription of these stereotypes in the field of an erotic fantasy, outlined in the closed cycle of the generation and reciprocal development of Don Lope's fantasy by the path traced by Tristana's desire. This is the erotic space from which the whole of Buñuel's fiction can be considered: the articulation of the propositions it invests and the logic of its blasphemy. What is said here is not to be confused with the anti-clerical message to which one might be tempted to reduce it: that Christianity and the bourgeoisie have castrated man and made woman into a fetish. Clearly Buñuel only formulates his double blasphemy (desiring the Virgin and giving God a phallus) the better to show Don Lope's impotence and Tristana's fetishization, and to subvert and complete

the bourgeois stereotype he presents of them by duplicating it, giving one character the role of an old pimp and the other the role of a prostitute. Moreover, these are roles which the two characters end up fantasizing for themselves (the equivocal images and scenes of the second part; the perverse use of Catherine Deneuve's loss of her leg, her make-up, her artificial limb, etc.); all the realism of the Buñuelian *écriture* tends towards a refusal to assign the characters any status other than that for which they are destined by the determinations of the signifiers invested in the fiction. But the castration, and the inability of both characters to envisage themselves other than within the field of a distorted representation where sex is included only in the denial expressed by the blasphemy (he is not castrated/she is not a fetish), are involved in a textual play which tells us that this essay on castration derives solely from the semantic field which is its framework. The great difference between *Tristana* and other films dealing with similar 'obsessions' is that it is not an obsessional film (it permits no reading other than the one invited by the dissection of its stereotypes, and does not conceal any secret put there unconsciously by the director. The relations of the stereotypes are those of a logic unmasked by *écriture*, and are not – as they are for example in Lang – implied by a *structural causality* invisible except in the recurring effects of the unconscious overdetermination of the text). Nor is *Tristana* a psychoanalytic film (it offers no diagnosis or theory about these 'symptoms'). Buñuel admits to knowing no more about what he is saying than what the assembly of all these stereotypes reveals to him and allows him to say about them. The great strength, as well as the impasse, of the film is that it apparently proceeds from no determination except the admission of this non-knowledge (a paradoxical admission, as we shall see).

6 A total impasse, then, and total mastery.

How, faced by this stumbling-block, can the analysis be taken further? No doubt by showing how the director himself runs up against his own ideological presuppositions and contrives to produce their impasse in the scenes of his film (the acme of destructive lucidity). The anarchist-bourgeois Don Lope quotes Sade, proclaiming the right of all to sexual pleasure and to 'freedom' in all its forms; but Buñuel soon shows the (fictional/real) problematic in which this ideology is inscribed: either that of a (religious) interdiction proceeding from an idealization which the blasphemy denounces; or that of a (bourgeois, Master/Slave) relation, correlated in the fiction with the castration/fetishization set up by the two characters who trade the parodic role of Master between them from the first to the second part of the film. (The correlative and mutually implicating erotic and social inscriptions of the fiction are not, to repeat, as in the 'classical' cinema, implicated in a relation of overdetermination: required by their elements belonging to a fictional terrain which also covers the nineteenth-century novel and the films of Renoir, and in which a distant reference to a pre-war Spain can be superimposed without creating a break.) In this castration/fetishization relation are thus inscribed precise allusions to the social order and to work, though they remain confined within Buñuel's libertarian ideology, which his *écriture* itself implies (rather like Renoir's). This produces a play of equivalent stereotypes (social, sexual, theological) that comment upon, reassert and cancel out each other (in the sole fictional perspective of death, but a fictionalized death whose rhetorical artifice is underlined by the unending end of the film).

7 Can one say that such a fiction still shares a common structure with all those governed by the progress of a woman? *Tristana* is different from them to the extent that they all set up the woman as the value (fetish) circulating from scene to scene, whose passage is a pretext either for showing us the building of her myth from the very point of view of her mythology (Hollywood), or for its critique of this from the 'humanist' (usually obsessional) point of view. *Tristana*, on the other hand (rather like Rouch's *Petit à petit*), gives us nothing more to consider than the series of stereotypes proposed of her. So while Tristana's desire is not to be loved as a fetish (virgin or prostitute), the most fetishistic scene of all is certainly the one in which (Buñuel denouncing his own critique of fetishism) she unveils her nudity to the mute, who cannot bear the sight, which is in fact absent from the film. But Buñuel's whole intention is to signify fetishism, at all possible levels and by all possible means, always making it play against the immediate fictional reference of each scene (for example in the (melo)dramatic scene in which the painter comes to bid a final farewell to Tristana and where Don Lope, suddenly roused, evokes the one-legged prostitute of his youth). Buñuel admits (see (5)) to knowing nothing of what he is manipulating, but the *écriture* of his film poses a problem: why is the theme of castration, fetishism and, more generally, desire posed in terms of knowledge and implicated in a fictional problematic of knowledge (that of Don Lope and Saturna who, though a bigot, knows a great deal about desire)? The film thus indicates its own kinship with a moment in the history of fiction (but also, correlatively, of ideology and science) when this becomes known, because written (since the end of the eighteenth century) and even theorized (by psychoanalysis). Inasmuch as it exploits the 'return of the repressed' in bourgeois writing, the film indicates its own position as an impasse (see (9)) in relation to a work in which it reinvests only what is already an object of an *ideological knowledge*, dispersed into various *equivalents* (religion/bourgeoisie, sex/money, sex/religion). The problem resolved by this *écriture* (and by all contemporary *écriture*) could be formulated as follows: since this is now established knowledge (that Christianity, bourgeois social relations and their sexual mores and fantasies are to a degree implicated in each other), how can it still be written (produced in an *écriture, as if* it were not already known) and said (since it cannot but be said, having become part of the record of what is known)?

8 Reduced to the blasphemous propositions from which previous films fashioned their small acts of bravado, the fiction demanded the symmetrical form and the binary variations which the film-maker draws from the

various situations in which those propositions are inscribed. The whole of the second part tends in fact to efface them, only to produce more scandalous versions. Their new formation is much more difficult to deal with than the first, because it reinvests the same set of propositions in an 'inverse' sense: the first set produced profane versions of religious figures through the means of bourgeois melodrama; the second set implicates these melodramatic stereotypes in a religious phraseology which is unpredictably revealed in operations which from then on are mysteriously carried out under its sign, accredited with everything the fiction produced in the first part. The Redemption of the sinner parallels the redemption of his silverware (and this Treasure comes back to him at the moment of Tristana's return); Charity takes the form of a dubious proposal; Marriage wipes out the blame and the blasphemy while monstrously bringing it into being; the (Great) Whore strolling down a dark corridor strangely punctuates the scene of the provincial meal of the three priests and the old man. (If Buñuel's art relates in any way to that of Goya, it is in a masterly ability to produce such plays of masks, duplication of figures, and plays of signifiers.) But the beauty and the pathos of the second part derive less from the invasion of the fiction by the religious stereotype than from the disparity it exposes between the properly erotic trajectory of *Tristana* (let us call it its *meaning*) and the trap which closes over both the fiction and its heroine. Having produced, by means of a presentation of eroticism, a blasphemy whose only function is to signify its impasse (castration and fetishism), Buñuel cannot avoid *duplicating* each scene so that the impasse may be genuinely signified rather than hidden by the religious significance of the scenes as it was in the first part. One might say that the principle of duplicating situations was strictly implied by the bias of his *écriture*, and was needed to bring out the significance of the detour (the perversion) the director imposes on himself in order to produce it; the perversion is ineffaceable, reasserting a blasphemy thereafter equally impossible to efface, because it is written. The first part progressively sets the blasphemy in place, the second produces it in the slightest play of the *écriture*, the slightest shot.

9 This erotic film can thus be read as a theological and blasphemous fiction in the same way that Eisenstein's films appear to be overdetermined by the figures of the Trinity. What they signify is only articulated from something already written which they reinvest, not without consciously or unconsciously being subject to its effects. (Where is the conscious/unconscious line to be drawn? Not, in any case, in the 'repression' of the pre-text within the operation of reinscription. Rather it should be in the fact that directors either know or do not know what part of their discourse is structurally implied by the operation of reinscription. The problem is thus not to know whether the inscription of figures and schemas borrowed from theological discourse implies a 'repression' of religion in Eisenstein, but to know what misrecognition this inscription may imply for his *actual* discourse. Clearly Eisenstein is not aware of everything he is saying, and

this lack of knowledge about his discourse can be found in the disparity between the revolutionary ideology he conveys (his meaning) and the relation between signifiers which produces that meaning but cannot be reduced to it. We could say that it is not possible to situate the unconscious in Buñuel's discourse – if there is one – at this level, because the director's project itself is to exhaust all the meanings already produced by the different signifying combinatories which he sets in play in a way that has no element of chance about it; it is regulated, we might say, by the *anticipated recognition*, counted on by the director, of the relationships set up. Not that this prevents surprises from being produced, as in the extraordinary scene of the meal, the most concentrated of all the scenes, in which a precipitation occurs which could only have come at the end of the film where it profits from the reassertion of all the previous combinatories.)

Buñuel's highly conscious work consists of seeking to extract maximum perversion effects, the lowest common denominator for the choice of each proposition being its power to signify one thing or another in different contexts. The whole film is in fact produced as a gigantic play on words, for which it would certainly be pointless to seek any other reason than the director's search for all the double meanings he could extract. There remains, however, one particularity, which derives not from the Buñuelian unconscious, but from that of Catholicism and the bourgeoisie (ours); namely that the twofold blasphemy, out of whose development and connection the fiction is produced (and here one might recall Lacan's 'upholstery buttons' [*points de capiton*][2]), signifies the major erotic obsessions of this culture. They designate the film as belonging to the register of all the bourgeois fictions which have been articulated by them (or rather, which have produced the signifiers of these obsessions, the unconscious not being anterior to the production of its signifiers. As Lacan says, the unconscious is not the condition of language, language is the condition of the unconscious, which is constituted, as an archive, by the superinscription of successive discourses). The difference of *Tristana* is that these obsessions are spelled out.

Both the absolute opacity and the total transparency of the film come from it being situated, in relation to the unconscious work of these obsessions, on the plane of knowledge (a knowledge wholly ignorant of its foundations) and of *play*. It is stuck in the absolute impasse of a knowledge which can no longer help being put back into play in order to reproduce, as if by chance, an already-written and an already-said, which again goes to show that *mastery is today more than compatible with play*: play may even be the last and only chance the Master has to make us and himself believe that he is producing a new discourse. This raises a question for which we can doubtless now provide the beginnings of an answer – the question of the *scriptural drive* which, independently of what he means to say, governs the production of a film-maker like Buñuel, and which impels him to produce a film much more schematic than his preceding films, more condensed and more structural, articulated at all points of its progress with the major signifier of castration (phallus/fetish). This clarification, this production which reverses the proliferation of the earlier discourses, seems to be governed by a single fantasy, or rather by the need to inscribe in the film no more than what is produced by the most reduced formula: a castrated man desires a fetishized woman. Now that Buñuel has made this film, we can see that the whole movement of bourgeois erotic *écriture* is towards an ever-increasing reduction of its discourse to that knowledge which obstructs it from the first and which it seems no more capable of 'transcending' than do all the images rehashing it today, especially advertising stereotypes, because contemporary social structures certainly continue to imply the inscription of the erotic relation in a discourse articulated with a universal equivalent (the phallus).

10 We have to speak of a 'mastered' *écriture* when talking about a fiction which invests its signifiers in a play such that any recourse to a referent which is not part of the already-said, already-written or already-seen (in the films of Buñuel and elsewhere) is excluded by the very fact that its *écriture*, and this alone, produces the *actualization* of the signifiers. (Rather than 'connotation', could we not speak of actualization – always in question, but also always possible through the very choice of terms of the signifying combinatory, of a series of groups – in the sense that we talk about groups in sculpture or in painting? These are implicated in a number of discourses, here essentially theological and erotic, whose homologous sequences are reciprocally actualized and eclipsed according to the context in which the combination of signifiers occurs; and that context is determined by specifically scenic indications issuing from the implication of these 'situations' in the field of different fictional subjects who both play a role and are indicators of role for the others.) This actualization is beyond all ambiguity or equivocation about contiguity with a particular concrete reality. (Recourse to a real referent can in any case only be thought of as the confrontation of the object produced by analysis of the film with the theoretical model, produced or borrowed, of the concrete reality the film is supposed to represent, or signify. In any case, we cannot pretend to escape – except by falling, more or less circumspectly, into the ideological illusion of direct knowledge – from the framework of at least two discourses dialectically implicated in the process of understanding the film as a signifying representation of a concrete reality.)

This textual play, disorienting though it is, in fact produces a series of equivalents (fictional, ideological, theological) which refer us to nothing less than an imaginary treasure-house (comparable to the linguist's) of which that play is itself a part, without adding anything except the distilled structure which arranges it. Like all contemporary *écriture*, *Tristana* simply 'liberates' the signifier; it does not tell us anything we do not already know about the equivalences it sets up, or teach us anything about the structural causality which determined the arrangements that the film plays with and destroys without deconstructing.

Perhaps today no other aesthetic practice is possible (we should ask why). And it is not to deny either its intelligence or its beauty, but to counteract the predictable praises which it cannot fail to receive, that I register my vote against the idea that *Tristana* deconstructs anything about bourgeois ideology, about theology, or about the 'neurosis' of the modern era (that would be asking more of it than we now ask of science); or that its *écriture* is in any way subversive, except in the field of an ideology and an aesthetics of the *text*, which we are not wrong to take as our basis.

11 We should (and increasingly we shall have to, with all this implies about the need to catch up on the ideology which is ready to cover the impasse) define the *ideological text* as an *écriture* which (re)produces already established equivalences, plays on words and perfectly controlled metaphors, within the very field of their prior production, or, as in this case, within a field constituted by their common denominator (accepting that the slight references to Spain in Buñuel's film are strictly filtered and conditioned by their insertion into the fiction); and as an *écriture* whose fictional form is thus strictly governed by the rhetoric implied by these equivalences (see (1)): in this case, a symmetry and a series of binary relations, prodigiously complicated, moreover, by the continual slides and perversions of the Buñuelian *écriture*, whose syntactical structures could be considered to constitute the entire 'unconscious' of the film. An admirable piece of bricolage, *Tristana* is inscribed in the framework of an aesthetics of residue which today perhaps signifies just that margin of 'freedom' conceded to producers and consumers in the domain of aesthetics (or rather in the field of a fictional production which no longer pays attention to anything except the rules of its own game, a game whose reasons it does not examine). We also should enjoy the thrill of this blasphemy, while remembering that it is only its *écriture* which is blasphemous and that it is only tolerated and liked by us because it is written in this way.

Translated by Joseph Karmel

Notes

1 This term, 'phallus', and associated ones, 'castration' and 'fetishization', are technical terms in the Lacanian formulation of the Oedipus complex. For Lacan, the 'phallus', different from the penis, is the 'signifier of desire' and is the major term, whether by presence or absence, in the founding and function of the Symbolic. For Anthony Wilden the symbolic value of castration inheres in 'this relationship of three terms, mother, child, and phallus (which) is changed through the function of the father, which inserts the lack of object into a new dialectic, and provides for what psychoanalysis calls the "normalization" of the Oedipus complex. . . . Thus in so far as the signification of a signifier is always another signifier (by metonymic displacement), the fetish would be a signifier of an original signifier, the phallus'. Anthony Wilden, 'Lacan and the Discourse of the Other' in *The Language of the Self*, pp. 186–8.

2 'Points de capiton': a term used by Lacan to describe the points of incidence of the chain of signifiers on the signified, the moment when meaning is ensured,

retrospectively. See Rosalind Coward, 'Lacan and Signification', in *Edinburgh '76 Magazine no. 1: Psycho-analysis/Cinema/Avant-garde*, p. 9.

9 Editorial: 'Japanese Cinema (1)'

('Cinéma japonais (1)', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 224, October 1970)

> We have not finished verifying the necessity of this pattern. Our century is not free from it; each time that ethnocentrism is precipitately and ostentatiously reversed, some effort silently hides behind all the spectacular effects to consolidate an inside and to draw from it some domestic benefit.
>
> Jacques Derrida[1]

To want to discuss the Japanese cinema today as dependent on a *logic* that is irreducible to our own ways of thinking (and not merely to furnish a little more information about it) implies taking up a position in relation to both the attempts to 'relate' it to Western thought ('humanist' approaches that eternally valorize Mizoguchi and Kurosawa, whose role as 'screens' may now be tentatively measured) and the gaps in our perceptions of it (gaps which have frequently served as the pretext of a valorization in terms of that cinema's radical 'otherness' as an exotic object – witness the recurrence of notions of 'violence' and 'eroticism' as expressions of Western thinking on the subject). On this latter point – without minimizing what can and should be done to extend the work taken up here (see below) – let us say clearly that our intention is in no way to attempt to establish a 'summary' or even less a 'guide' to the Japanese cinema. Instead of the false perspectives of 'anthologies' and 'panoramas' we will propose a deliberate choice of selected films. These films will certainly not take the place of those we are unable to see, but will none the less represent them in a legitimate way in terms of our project (as we will show below). As for the first point: it is above all a question of avoiding ethnocentric, reductionist gestures that consist simply of hypostatizing pure *scriptural effects*. It should then be possible to examine this cinema as a *signifying practice*,[2] that is as a body of codified practices, acts of *écriture* possessing their own logic; the task would be to bring to light their overdetermination (aesthetic, political, erotic) and the multiplicity (historical, sociological, even geographic) of their sources. Any study of an oriental culture must take into account two major points: the Orient's relationship to materialism, and its use of non-phonetic writing systems (pre-dating the Western idealist disjunction between writing and painting).

Our project, then (for which the exhaustive knowledge that we lack is not essential), is to identify and examine, *through* and *within* certain films, the occurrences and specificity of (1) a conception of 'the subject' as 'decentred' and 'diluted' (without wishing to misapply an argument that can only be metaphorical, the analogy with language is revealing: Japanese lacks a 'full' speech which could guarantee the existence of the human 'subject' – cf. Pierre Baudry's article[3]); (2) a conception of figuration as a discrete form of coding and not as representation by analogy (cf. Pascal Bonitzer's article[4]); (3) an explicit articulation of the symbolic domain (where one seeks, in Barthes' formulation, 'not other symbols but the very *fissure* of the symbolic' – cf. Sylvie Pierre's article[5]). This project – it virtually goes without saying – must at the same time take into account all that, in these films and in the Japanese cinema in general, reflects the inverse effect, in the history of aesthetics and of technology, of the cinema as a *Western* invention.

The knowledge we possess of Japan is, obviously, fragmentary and unreliable. Although our interest in Japanese cinema is far from brand new, it none the less risks producing a pure and indistinct valorization of 'differences' (ethnocentrism in reverse) if we do not simultaneously identify our potential misunderstandings. In other words, we must recognize our own frame of reference, the specificity of our own cultural codes. In announcing a study of Japanese cinema, we must thus first of all admit a double lack. On the one hand, of the three directors considered here (Hani, Masumura, Yoshida – four if we count Oshima, considered in issue no. 218[6]), we still know very little of how their work relates to Japanese film production as a whole. Each of them is not slow to define this relation to his own advantage – an essential point, particularly in the case of Masumura, whose attachment to the 'Five Companies' (Daiei, Nikkatsu, Shintoho, Shochiku, Toho) makes him scandalous in the eyes of his colleagues, a scandal many aspects of which escape us. On the other hand, the very coherence of each director's particular method is assumed here on the basis of a small part of their whole production. This is a substantial gap in terms of a production system in which, both within and outside the 'Five Companies', quantity is the rule. (Hani is the only director whose work may be seen almost in its entirety in Paris – at the Cinémathèque – and he is also the least prolific: nine feature films to date. The quick shooting schedules of most Japanese directors, including Kurosawa, are legendary. It would be helpful to explain this situation in a more satisfactory manner than the lazy and hackneyed view which sees it as a 'natural' extension of the free and precise gesture of the pen that traces ideograms!) It is in full awareness of these lacks, and while awaiting further studies (including, among others, analyses of the current state of a cinema frequently regarded as 'in crisis'), that the following texts must be seen as a first, fragmentary evaluation of the way in which a certain number of films are important to us – and put questions to us.

But let us restate our points clearly: we want to avoid any hasty assimilation as well as any fascination with 'otherness', and if we must speak of oppositions we will at least define their terms. The phrase 'Japanese cinema' will designate for us a practice in which cultural traditions ('Japanese') elaborated in other areas, above all in painting and in theatre (even including such hypercoded practices as Bunraku), are undoubtedly put to use – though less extensively than is often implied. But this practice is in other respects, and above all, subject to the same analogical codes of representation and narration ('cinema') as its Western counterpart – even if, in its most striking manifestations, it seems to possess more subtle means of subverting them. It is thus solely as 'examples', and not as models to be taken literally, that we will evoke some celebrated precedents: Brecht, who reworked in a directly political framework his aesthetic interest in the Chinese theatre's use of space, gestures and the body as signifying systems; Eisenstein, who confronted his own theoretical reflections with the 'montage' principles he discovered in ideographic writing or in the paintings of Sharaku (cf. no. 215[7]); and even Artaud, who found in oriental civilizations the example of a 'materialist conception of mind'.

The Japanese cinema has always impressed Western spectators, more or less consciously, by a characteristic use of space, which has hitherto been described as 'partitioned' or 'fragmented' and related to scroll painting. This phenomenon might be better defined today as a *style* (understood not as static, decorative ornamentation nor, in a Hegelian perspective, as a unitary effect of a univocal inscription, but rather as the mark of a pluralist inscription of differing codes), making of space a *system* and not a naturalistic 'duplication' of the world. Westerners have likewise readily recognized in Japanese cinema a technique of narration and of *mise en scène* that owes more to theatrical partitioning than to any novelistic 'flow' of events. Here, too, Japanese cinema depends less upon a search for verisimilitude or realism than on coding procedures imported (discreetly) from a practice (traditional theatre: No, Kabuki) where any 'action' has a signification before it serves as a representation. All this, which has been known for some time – if not always correctly appreciated – should be examined here not merely because of the subversive values that such attitudes represent in the context of European cinema, but also because they have a close relationship with a general problematic of the sign. Of this problematic we know, at least approximately, the roles played by, among other elements, (1) the place of the Father Figure, occupied for a time by the Emperor (since become an 'empty' signified, at the very moment of the collective trauma of defeat, a true castration, mutilation of the national body), then by the State and its repressive Apparatus (cf. the 'pyramidal' system evoked by Yoshida, which should be related to its reduced model: the 'the'[8]); (2) the absence of a monotheistic concept of God as the 'ultimate signified', concomitant with the non-existence of the Western concept of the 'subject' (as witness the Japanese pronoun 'I', which is most frequently expletive, and which does not refer to any notion of interiority); (3) parallel to this, a sexual configuration which is not regulated by the phallus as principal signifier and which is, as a result, *dispersed* in terms both of its medium (the human body as wholly erotic) and of its modes. In this perspective, the interviews which follow should be read not as anecdotes but as theoretical texts. In the discourse of directors who know how to speak and who wish to speak, above all, of *what* is *said* – or not said – by and in their films, one may see at work the same 'subjectivity' (Barthes, again, has clearly shown at the beginnng of *L'Empire des signes* how this may be taken as 'modesty': the subject not as full 'core' but as empty container taking the place of what is spoken – hence the feeling that Japanese expresses 'only impressions, and never facts') which is the foundation, in Japanese cinema, of the place and function of the *signifier*.

Translated by Alan Williams

Notes

1 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Spivac, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, p. 80.
2 'Signifying practice': see Ch. 6, note 3.
3 Pierre Baudry, 'Sur *Premier amour, version infernale*', Hani's *Hatsukoi Jigokuhen* ('Inferno of First Love', 1968).
4 Pascal Bonitzer, 'Un film en plus', on Yoshida's *Eros + Massacre* (1969).
5 Sylvie Pierre, 'Japon/castration'.
6 In articles by Pascal Bonitzer and Jacques Aumont and an interview with Oshima by Bonitzer, Michel Delahaye and Sylvie Pierre.
7 In 'Hors Cadre' ('Beyond the Shot'), one of a number of Eisenstein essays published in translation in *Cahiers*. The essay was translated by Jay Leyda as 'The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram' in *Film Form*, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949.
8 On the concept of the 'the', cf. the conversation between Sadoul, Oshima, Hani, Teshigahara and Urayama in *Cahiers* 166–7. (Authors' note.)

10 Jean Narboni: 'Vicarious Power'

('La vicariance du pouvoir', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 224, October 1970)

> Your cold discourse can never move the mind
> Of a stern critic, naturally unkind,
> Who, justly tired with your pedantic flight,
> Or falls asleep or censures all you write.
>
> Boileau, on *Othon* (*The Art of Poetry*)[1]

> He challenges the accusation of obscurity – why not, from the common stock, incoherence, drivel, plagiarism, without falling back on some special, deterrent accusation – or another, that of banality; but this one, peculiar to those who, to free the public of the need for comprehension, are the first to simulate confusion.
>
> I prefer, faced with aggression, to retort that my contemporaries do not know how to read –
>
> Except for the newspaper; it has the advantage that it doesn't interrupt the train of one's preoccupations.
>
> Reading –
>
> That habit –
>
> Mallarmé[2]

Short of total misunderstanding, the title, first of all, needs to be read. The line, *Eyes do not want to close at all times* (and its supplement, the geopolitical side: *or Perhaps one day Rome will permit herself to choose in her turn*[3]), substituted for the title of Corneille's play (and it is indeed a logic of substitution and of supplements which will occupy us throughout this article), should not be taken simply as the lesson, the 'moral', the ultimate signified or the primary truth of the film. (It is in any case already ambiguous: the formulation of a vow, an intimation, a gamble with the future, a possibly menacing injunction to vigilance or lucidity?) It should be taken rather as a formula which, through a subtle turn, designates the spectator by assigning him a place and a *role*, by inscribing him in the play of the *écriture* (as the film itself persists in doing, going so far as to dictate the *rhythm* of the work required).

Thus a prefatory formulation with two senses (also productive of an overlapping of senses since it is a question of 'opening one's eyes' in a film where the work of listening ought apparently to predominate, but which develops a reciprocal integration of sounds, lines and colours, to which we shall need to return). The formulation, appropriated from the text of the play, immediately requires that we apply it to ourselves; that is, not only that we see it (see the film) but also enter into it, perform in it in our turn.

What, by way of peripeteia, threatens the film, and therefore also affirms in *relief* its radical, daring quality (so radical as to make almost everything which presents itself as cinema today appear diminished and ageing, despite 'renascences' and other second comings periodically announced to ensure survival), is precisely its unacceptability to all those – producers, programmers, distributors, critics – who, since they have nothing more to do *with* the film (and are therefore incapable of reopening the case by an active reading), can see literally nothing more *in* it (being reduced, since they have no control *over* it – cannot attach themselves as parasites, enjoy or exploit it – to resorting to expedients).

To begin with, Straub deprives criticism of what it cannot function without: the *subject* (the author, the Creator, the 'temperament' through which Nature must be seen in order to gain Art's guarantee: one, in any event, who *refuses* his identity in the certainty of his presence to himself and in the assurance of his attributes); the *theme* ('I believe that cinema, like music for Stravinsky, is incapable of expressing anything at all'; 'I believe that we should make films without meaning, I hope that film means nothing' – J.-M. S.; statements which do not, to forestall a very old objection, champion the meaningless, the irrational or 'pure form', but affirm the powers of an *écriture* working on meaning and producing *effects of meaning* without any final recourse to it as to some necessarily transcendental signified); and finally, *style* (the embellishment, the charm, the connotations, the *bill*, what is *covered*, what has to be paid: 'I make things without art' – J.-M. S.). It is in any case normal today that *écritures* operating in various fields and based on a commitment to *not-meaning* (and thus hostile to the expressive idealist tradition of meaning as the being of the sign), *écritures* for which the stake, even if indirectly, is also a political stake, should elicit nothing but rejection (either ruthless, on grounds of imposture, abstruseness, deliberate illegibility; or condescending, which is in fact the same attitude, on grounds of poverty and deficiency). These reactions are largely due (we have daily proof, and this was bound to happen with increased intensity in the case of a film which 'attacks' a 'classical' play) to the custodians of knowledge, the proprietors of culture and those who, having absolute control in this particular area, cannot fail to be alarmed by a text and a presentation that is for them 'incredible' or 'distorted' ('faults' in which we, on the contrary, shall find the most positive effect of Straub's work). We must here and now recognize and reaffirm that it is outside and in spite of these areas of obscurantist resistance that a film such as this is destined to enter the field of greater legibility.[4]

One can no longer describe as sobriety, ascetic rigour, abstraction, stylistic discretion (as a positive but equally reductive reading might do) the loss of a 'message', the elimination of all rhetoric and the rejection of the notion that 'style makes the man' (J.-M. S. – unless one adds the Lacanian correction: 'the man to whom one speaks', this being the reader who is led 'to an effect to which he would have to contribute'). More often than not, what is appreciated under such headings proves to be nothing but an ostentatious and emphatic gesture in which a feigned rigour and an affected simplicity that is sure of its effects may be clothed, presented, enveloped. The shocking quality of *Othon*, by contrast, lies in the stark but intense move (indifferent in its precision and conciseness to the subversive power it contains) towards strangling eloquence, reducing it to silence ('I wanted to make a film about aphasia').

This type of approach, ever present in Straub's earlier films (indicating in addition its own operation of *écriture*), is here carried to a higher degree of efficiency and yield, and is necessarily expanded and generalized, in so far as it takes for its theatre of operations, and grafts itself on to, a pre-existent, classical text and play. 'Strangling eloquence', 'aphasia', 'reducing to silence' should here be read at their most literal.

To begin with, the basic apparatus set up by Straub[5] – the casting of actors living for the most part outside the province of the French language, unequally versed in French and distinguished by their accents; the relative freedom allowed them in their pronunciation of the text (a freedom monitored, controlled, circumscribed by Straub: there were months of rehearsals, and the selection of takes was very strict) – does not abandon the stage to anarchic improvisation, disorder, eccentric innovation. Straub's assumed lack of control does not imply a surrender to coincidence as a final appeal (coincidence is 'a cheap signifier, a bargain signifier', Roland Barthes, *Cahiers* 222[6]). It gives it a defined area, a circumscribed field of action, a *margin* for manoeuvre inscribed in the machinery itself (whereas petit bourgeois power fantasies can only transform themselves into other, even more ridiculous fantasies, effervescence, the free and easy, the lucky find, the happening, the 'do it yourself').

The first effect of this arrangement (and ultimately the least important one) is to sterilize the congestion in the traditional diction of the line by banning expressiveness, emotional shadings, smooth delivery, phrasing, rubato, interiorizing and psychology. Each actor (who does not 'possess' the language – and rarely has an act of expropriation been taken so far) has to concentrate on the mass and density of the text (performance must also be interpreted in a physical sense).

But what is more decisive than the baring of the text (which might have amounted to no more than a mere modernist 'stripping down') is the fact that the stage (and here it is breaking with a whole theological notion of representation) is no longer dominated from without and in advance by a speech which controls it, which is recited, fed back by actors subservient to it. Since the actor works *in* and *against* the language (no longer on it), the obstacles he encounters transform themselves into rhythm, into discharges (this being, according to Straub, the 'spoken', not speech). The voice no longer conveys the text, but facilitates a way through it and inscribes in the *énoncé* the mark of its break-in, which is not effaced, dislocating discrete syntactic or metric units, sometimes dismembering the line itself, creating new groupings through sudden abridgements. The *énoncé* transforms itself into *a desire of the voice,* in the opening up of its own space and in its effort of penetration, *for* the *énoncé(r)*. (In this sense too, with all deference to hobbled minds, the film is erotic. Hence too its association with the *écriture* of dreams, where the work is also not effaced from what it produces; hence its ability to provoke laughter, as long as the laughter is not that of Lautréamont's 'cocks',[7] but a greater laughter in the face of danger.) The reserved force of the phrase (reserved in the dual sense of maintained and discreet, since this force acts through condensation and slight shifts, not through anarchic disruptions) sets off, according to Jacques Derrida's formulation, a 'power of inscription no longer merely verbal, but phonic. Polyphonic.' Effectively polyphonic, since the confrontation, the distribution, the opposition of dictions, correlated to the interplay of shots and movement within shots, spatializes the text, lends it a scenic volume. The *énonciation/énoncé* disjunction is in jeopardy here, since (J.-L. Schefer, 'Scénographie d'un tableau'): 'How, uncommonly, is the *énonciation* not *énoncé(e)* here? (and in turn every *énoncé* an *énonciation*? . . . the *énonciation* is not the act of production but the structure of the *énoncé*)'. The representational fall-out, the inevitable *remainder* (inevitable and *necessary,* otherwise there would be confusion, bad illegibility), is set off again, put into play, since it continues to work through an excess of power which separates it from its mark. (This is why those readings that take account only of the fall-out fail to deal with the gnawing violence, noticing it only in its most mediocre form, where it flaunts itself in surface effects and pointless convulsions: Boorman, Penn, Pollack.) Hammering out the text, dissecting it ('He holds up . . . the . . . vows') or condensing it in another form of economy ('They'll destroy us soon if we don't destroy them/It's all too plain'), the voice dictates not only its function (to write the text in *our* turn), but also its quality (endurance) and its rhythm (of necessity synchronous with its pattern and its changes: acceleration, delays, slowing down; the dry rapidity of Othon; the relentless flow of Martian, almost indifferent to its development;

Camille's hammered out periods; Galba's laborious drawing out, giving the character an impression of 'expressivity', in fact only a mark of the effort of enunciation).

However: the recurrence of gesture, suppressed in any simply representational discourse, does not annul the text in this case, even if it works it and is unfaithful to it. The power, which cannot be hidden and does not disappear in meaning, produces the text instead of suppressing it. This is not a 'fragmentation of *Othon*' or a disordering (a merely banal inversion of a classic performance, and therefore academic). If such an endeavour were to move beyond meaning and the sign, beyond reason, it would – in our culture – remain a metaphysically narcissistic enterprise. Here meaning and signs are at least inscribed (marked, recorded and performed, as a dependent element and not as an omnipotent recourse).

Which is to say, everything here is audible, no word is *lost*. Traversing it as a structuring principle, the *énonciation* makes the text audible, implicitly, in accordance with its own syntax and metrics, its logic and its method ('the dialectic of Corneille, which is not one but is one all the same', J.-M. S.); it transgresses *and* preserves the text (like an interdict, the initial text is lifted but not suppressed). Here, one can verify the arguments of Jakobson, point for point: 'The configuration specific to a poem at the level of the line is completely independent of its variable renderings – which does not mean that the tempting question, raised by Sievers, of the *Autorenleser* and the *Selbstleser*,[8] has no significance.' Two texts (speaking, speech) read into each other here, one through the other in a reciprocal interaction and overlap, demanding more than a single hearing, even an attentive one, a monitoring (in the analytic sense), an auscultation.

Moreover, all this (do we need reminding?) takes place in a film. Were Corneille's text, even worked on like this, not arranged according to an organized scenic (filmic) whole – framed by it and marking it in return – it would recoup, after a seductive and insidious detour, its traditional supremacy and authority, only momentarily suspended. The operation performed here does not bear particularly or primarily (chronologically speaking) on the text of the play, which would subsequently be inscribed in a 'fully' cinematic work through its division into shots, through the secondary, contingent intervention of the '*mise en scène*'. A single action carries the text, the figures and the fabric of film, a single apparatus encompasses them, registers them, distributes them, reactivates them *simultaneously*, and our analysis has, at least for the moment, arbitrarily (but also necessarily) privileged one part of the machine: the spoken text (the source of greatest resistance, it must be added, not only in this case but traditionally in the history of representation). Our investigation must now address itself to the overall economy of the apparatus of cinematic *écriture*. We must therefore concern ourselves with the *stage* and, in trying to analyse *the film*, give our undivided attention (in accordance with Straub's own strategy) to *the theatre*.

Actually, one can see indications today – in its progressive and irreversible advance – of the possibility of a general materialist *écriture* which has little to do with what has been regarded as 'committed art' (in literature, theatre, cinema . . .), still perpetuated here and there in spite of its historically certifiable (theoretical, political) failure. This generalized *écriture,* whose law has been pronounced by Jacques Derrida as *detached reference, being apart* (threatening, in its infinite metaphorical circulation, the very bases of traditional ontology and mimetology), advances by slight, decisive *shifts* (and not by inopportune 'stunning' proclamations, which as such remain prisoners of the same circle) within the structures which it inhabits, in order to erode and to work them. It constitutes a mortal danger not only for bourgeois artistic ideology, but also for those who, under the guise of progressivism, can conceive of no *Other* for servile naturalism than its banal formalist inversion.[9] This *écriture,* necessarily linked to social, historical and political reality, and provided that it does not passively reflect their contradictions but produces contradictions and effects of meaning in its own right, is capable of conveying various signifying practices (among others, cinema). It has nothing to do with the unitary myth of total art, or with the aspiration towards an absolute art (synthesis and fusion of all the others), but on the contrary insists on their distinctive characteristics and the particularity of their methods of notation. Now, selecting from the whole of Western culture a group of names with which one associates the attempt, in varying places, periods and fields, to establish such a *écriture* – Eisenstein,[10] Mallarmé, Artaud – one is struck by the fact that they thought of the *theatre stage* (not necessarily theatre understood in its usual sense, since for the first of them it was the cinema, for the second the Book, and for the last a theatre remote from what is ordinarily understood by that word) as the *locus* capable of generating and inscribing its play; of disrupting representational levelling out, of spatializing expressive linearity in volume and range and constructing a material depth (rather than an idealist, unifying, totalizing one, such as might be founded on the vanishing point and perspective, which places the eye at the centre of the space).

Given that Straub's work (today the most advanced attempt to establish, in this area, such an *écriture*) addresses the very notion of theatrical, scenic space, one can argue that the problem has been posed in its widest generality, at its nodal point, and that no resolution is attainable unless thoroughly conceptualized. Consequently, we are confronted here with *the* relation, the question of *this* (which?) relation of theatre and cinema.

To avoid any confusion, we must be more specific: a proposal to study, in *Othon,* the function and 'nature' of a certain relation and play between the theatre stage and the mode of its cinematic inscription does not imply the assumption that the film results from two chronologically distinct phases – the transition from Corneille's text (with its few stage directions) to a theatrical setting, and from there to a cinematic inscription. But – and here Straub's contribution is of capital importance – what might be pinpointed as an intermediate, purely theatrical phase, even if it has not actually manifested itself, has nevertheless not been annulled or cancelled out. We might even say, *on the contrary*: the film combines the construction of a theatre stage *and* its cinematic transformation in a single operation; it *simultaneously* effects a theatrical setting and its subversion. Our attempt to grasp the articulation of this relation by arbitrarily isolating two 'moments' (as we did earlier with the recited text, before reinstating it in the functional whole), irrelevant if the film had purely and simply passed over this second phase (thus annulling the problem without solving it), proves justifiable and even necessary, given its *reverse* movement from one scene to the other (from the necessarily cinematic legible surface to the stage which it includes through transformation), each of these two scenes reading itself through the other, *in* the other.

At this point, we must make a historical detour and return to André Bazin's important writings on the problem in *Théâtre et cinéma*.[11] We do so both to confirm his extreme perspicacity and rigorous method (far in advance of the bulk of current criticism, to the point that many of the reproaches aimed at *Othon* are there anticipated, noted and deconstructed), and to understand the shift which Straub's practice accomplishes in relation to them: a shift which is the essential *almost nothing* that separates idealism, in one of its most coherent manifestations, from materialism. Indeed, for Bazin, in the play of theatre/cinema relations:

1 The catastrophic solution consists of injecting cinematic 'signs' by force, and as a guarantee of cinematic 'specificity' (cinema conceived of here as having time, the largest possible space, and movement freely at its disposal). Today, the point seems pretty definitively won – only a few stick-in-the-muds still think to stage *Bérénice* in the gardens of the Trocadéro to 'make it real'.

2 Arguing consistently from the assumptions of an 'ontological realism of the cinematic image', he states: 'Cinema being essentially a dramaturgy of nature, there can be no cinema without the construction of an open space, *substituting* itself [our emphasis: JN] for the world instead of including itself in it. The screen cannot give us the illusion of this sense of space without resorting to certain natural guarantees. But it is less a question of the construction of a decor, an architecture, an immensity, than of identifying an aesthetic "catalyst" which, minutely applied in the staging, can project us fully into "nature".' Bazin's examples of 'catalysts' are today well known: the handful of 'real' earth in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*; the windscreen wiper, the murmur of cascading water, or the rush of earth as it spills from a broken vase in *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*; the 'quivering of a simple birch branch in the wind', animating the concrete forest of *Nibelungen*.

3 The most successful fusions of theatre and cinema, still according to Bazin, are those films (Welles' *Macbeth*, Cocteau's *Les Parents terribles*) in which the film-maker, far from masking the provenance and the theatrical

character of his pre-text, accentuates and emphasizes them: 'Cocteau as film-maker understood that he should not add anything to his set, that the cinema was not there to expand it but to *intensify* it' (our emphasis). And again: 'Rather than attempt, like so many others, to dissolve theatricality in film, he uses the resources of the camera to accentuate, underline and *confirm* stage structures and their psychological corollaries. The particular contribution of cinema can only be defined here as an *increase* in theatricality' (our emphasis again). An observed (and positive) effect of this 'increase' in theatricality lies in the viewer's assignment to a position of radical exteriority: 'The "subjective camera" has finally been realized, but in reverse: not, as in *The Lady in the Lake*, thanks to a puerile identification of the spectator with the character, through the intermediary of the camera, but rather through the pitiless exteriority of the witness. . . . The drama once more becomes fully a spectacle.'

In one motion and with a single action, Straub challenges and threatens these two groups of propositions. Everything turns on the phrase: 'there can be no cinema without the construction of an open space, *substituting* itself for the world instead of including itself in it' (our emphasis). This logic of the supplement conceived as a danger by the entire Western metaphysical tradition, which could only grasp its movement unilaterally (as what comes in from outside to add to a full, internal unity, and is therefore perceived as a threat), is itself placed under threat by the logic of supplementarity elaborated by Jacques Derrida *in* the spaces of Rousseau's discourse (*De la Grammatologie*[12]): 'movement of supplementarity whereby the poles replace each other *by turn*' (Derrida's emphasis); or later: 'the logic of supplementarity which seeks to take the external on to the inside, to have the other and the absent added as a more which replaces a less, and to make what is added to something stand in for the lack in that thing, so that the lack, as the outside of the inside, is already there within the inside, etc.'

It is necessary, therefore, to conceive of the supplement as *simultaneously* adding and substituting itself. One scene adding to and substituting for another, without purely and simply replacing, without any final unity, without an annulment of the difference.

At once surplus and substitution, superfluity and vicariousness.

Straub, then, shows a representation, and a representation in the making. One must here restore to the word 'representation' the dynamism which substantives in *-tio* lost, as Roland Barthes has pointed out, in the transition from Latin to French, which has set, crystallized and preserved them (depriving them of their active denotation: gesture, movement, process: the act of representing and not merely the result of that act). As the developing representation does not ever conceal its identity as such, the two stages (theatre set and film set) superimpose themselves one on the other (can one distinguish, in a superimposition, *what* is in front and *what* behind?), one passing into the other, the first designating the second as what makes it visible, the second enclosing the first as what it points up and transgresses, each inscribing the other, *which at that moment exceeds and overlaps it*. (The claim that the cinema remains the ultimate agent, which cannot be exceeded *since what we see is a film*, is clearly a victim of the metaphysical argument which Derrida has demolished.) Moreover, only such a novel economy can make comprehensible the function that Bazin's 'catalysts', which he conceived as mere 'impressions of reality', assume in *Othon* (the car shots). Theirs is a function meant neither to 'reinforce' a scenic 'realism' (since the car-costume association alone indicates the quality of representation in the making), nor to submerge the scene in its historical exterior (the catalysts are a false exterior and add to the impression of enclosure). Rather they are meant to integrate with the set as things uprooted from their original ground (their real referent, in accordance as it were with a fissuring of the *denotatum* in *definitum* and *designatum* – cf. again Schefer, op. cit.), becoming backcloths, flats, indicators of their own provenance, not in order to return there, but to insert *into* the representational enclosure an opening towards its unlimited exterior, as limited tokens fashioned by the infinity of that exterior (history).

Everything, then, is expressed in echoes, repercussions (not only of voices, but of all the sound elements: breathing into the microphone, 'blanks', wind, static, all the violent disharmonies which contribute to the score), imprints of one flat (shot, surface and 'depth', but it will be seen that such distinctions are no longer relevant) on another, from face to face of the dynamic cube generated by the functioning of the apparatus (transitions from shot to shot being for the most part effected *within* the sound).[13] The apparatus deploys its volume from within (and it is appropriate to say at this point that this 'deep', plural space is not created in an illusory way within the shot through the use of perspective and the vanishing point, but between shots). The shots refuse 'depth' (rarely has 'flatness' been more deliberate), their calculated duration having the effect of an indefinite annulment of the background by the surface and of the surface by the background (as a duplicated surface); the 'figures', actors, 'characters' appear alternately as cut-outs on the backdrop (the set which produces them) and volumes which in return produce the surface needed for their presentation, as if they were propped up by it.

We are on the verge of Artaud's dream of the integration of speech, movement and colour. At this point, we can understand: 'It was in fact my voice rising from a vision of colour, or rather from the burning depths of colour', and 'again I see sounds penetrating the sky to the depths of my eyes' (Sollers, *Nombres*). Here too, infallibly, emerges the failure of *Cinéthique*'s *ban* on colour and synchronized sound as irrevocably tied to idealist, representational cinema, a stance conceivable in circumstances, alien to Straub, where they offer a guarantee of veracity, but functioning here in the implementation and formation of the musical range (a role given to sound as formative of the *space* off-screen). Here, the radical exteriority of the spectator, for which Bazin had hoped, is annulled (without a replacement through phantasmatic projection, hypostasis, participation in an illusion). For the reader can call himself such only in so far as he enters the game, is produced as an effect of the text (like Straub himself saying: 'I try, initially, not to include my anger and my sadness'), and is played upon in turn (that is, is introduced *and* tricked). The classic ontological conception of supplementarity ('The universe of the screen cannot be juxtaposed to ours, it necessarily *substitutes* itself, since the very notion of a universe is spatially exclusive. For a while the film is the Universe, the World, or, if you like, Nature.' (our emphasis again – J.N.) – Bazin) is undercut here. For it is not a question of 'intensifying', 'heightening', 'emphasizing' the theatre, nor of endowing the play with 'additional theatricality', but of *rehearsing* it (of adding to *and* replacing, not one or the other, nor one to the exclusion of the other). To quote Mallarmé: 'A book [we might add a film] in one's hand, if it expresses a noble idea, replaces all theatre, not by making us forget it, but on the contrary by recalling it urgently to mind.' The film does not absorb the play (any more than the scenes of the film follow and erase one another – they slide into each other without being effaced). Nor does it gather in the play as an outside, into the familiarity of an inside. It slides in, in order to space it out (not to lengthen it; the long movement of the camera following Lacus and Martian at the end of Act II does not 'expand' cinematically), and in order to undo fixed articulations, intruding itself as a divergence, dismembering the play through punctuation ('blank spaces', pauses, emptinesses, suspense, beginnings and endings of shots, between Straub's shots his 'hidden framework'). In two startlingly clear statements, Straub himself defines the progress of this *écriture*: 'In the first four acts, the blocking is cinematic and the breakdown of shots *more* theatrical, in the fifth act the blocking is theatrical and the breakdown of shots cinematic' (at the same time, the *more* which we have emphasized marks the constant transition from one to the other). But above all: 'The shot breakdown of the film *contradicts* Corneille's structure of a tragedy in five acts, *and* adds to it' (our emphasis).

In some sense, then, and from whatever angle, there is one stage [*scène*] more, in addition to, the other. Just as, in Corneille's play, which we have not abandoned after all (any more than Straub, who says he likes in it its *Scarface* or *Big Sleep* side, the political *range*, the precipitation and collision of detective plots cancelling each other out), there is a role and a candidate too many (Othon and/or Pison) for a place, not yet empty, at the head of the Empire (Galba).

It was never more than a matter of power – decidedly impossible – to be seized.

Thus, Corneille/Mallarmé; the one to be read in the other, Straub being an addition: 'His plotted gestures, his measured glance/Yielded no words to the hand of chance (. . . *The expected interval, having, in effect, as its lateral walls*) You'll always undo my advice with your own/At the sound of my voice you take another tone (*the dual opposition of the panels*) One's eyes don't always wish to close (*and facing, before and behind, the opening of unsounded doubt echoed in the prolongation of the sound from the panels . . .*).'

Translated by Leigh Hafrey

Notes

1 Translated (Soame) in *The Art of Poetry*, ed. A.S. Cook, New York, G.E. Stechert, 1926, p. 186.

2 From 'Quant au livre' in *Variations sur un sujet, Oeuvres complètes*, Paris, Pléiade, 1945, pp. 386–7.

3 As in France, the film is more usually known in Britain and the USA by its shorter title, *Othon*.

4 Without falling for the charismatic illusion of pure vision, a fresh eye and a talent, in the hope of an *instantaneous* and miraculous legibility of *Othon* for the most disadvantaged social groups. The scientific studies of Bourdieu and Passeron on the sociology of aesthetic* perception have demonstrated that workers, confronted with an art product, do not assume a 'spontaneous' approach, but rather that of their absent bourgeois culture; and that the non-possession of cultural codes does not in any way enhance the reading of works which demand, in order to be read, a mastery of those codes and the possibility of their rejection. Possibilities practically forbidden, in our society, to the working class (hence the connection of this fundamental point with the problem of educational systems and, more broadly, with that of class struggle and the overthrow of bourgeois capitalist rule). Now, in *our* time: (1) a film such as *Othon* (to limit ourselves to this cinema; but this applies equally well, taking into account all the necessary differential particulars, to the 'avant-garde' materialist *écritures* which occur elsewhere, particularly in the area referred to as 'literary') cannot be *accepted* by the possessors of bourgeois knowledge who are definitively caught up in their codes and conditioning, even if, as is the case, these are in decline; (2) It is possible, through unceasing *and reciprocal* work, to facilitate the film's penetration into the strata of the petit bourgeois intelligentsia wishing to align themselves with Marxist positions. A considerable stake, a task which is ours at *Cahiers* (for a reading public almost entirely composed of people whose class identity and culture are petit bourgeois, as is incidentally the case with those who contribute to the journal); (3) There remains a major problem, if Lautréamont's formula ('poetry must be made by all, not by one') is not to be recuperated by illusionists or side-tracked into 'spontaneous' uses of no scope: the problem of work, of a type of work to be carried out in the area of those social classes which have no access to culture. A problem which is *immediately* political.

* We preserve the term 'aesthetic' (used by Bourdieu and Passeron), realizing full well that it poses the problem of determining whether texts produced today by what conceives of itself as signifying practice and not as 'art' still belong in this category; and also that it raises the question of the very bases of this category. Which in no way invalidates the question of reading introduced in this note. (Author's note.)

5 See Jean-Claude Biette's article in *Cahiers* 218, p. 43. (Author's note.)

6 Roland Barthes, 'Le troisième sens', *Cahiers* 222, July 1970.

7 Lautréamont's 'cocks': the reference is to Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror*.

8 Which translate literally as 'reading for the author' and 'reading for oneself' (*Essays in General Linguistics*). (Author's note.)

9 Necessarily present in the place prescribed for it in the film itself, the 'refutation' appears, in *Positif* 119, under the initials M.C. The approach – traditional and repetitive – is easily dismantled today (though not without tedium): intimidation for intimidation ('already considered one of the masterpieces of modern cinema by a few influential and well-placed incense-bearers'), urbane witticisms ('they speak of bison and Popeye, when they mean Pison and Poppaea'), attacking the film by resorting to those who defend it incompetently (Richard Roud's favourable article on *Othon*), false 'inside' information (that Straub is considering a dubbed version), a casual accumulation of cultural 'class' indices, academic tics ('*Othon*, a political tragedy of Corneille's old age, and a fine one to boot', 'Straub, not long since a talented film-maker' . . . 'the worst reciting competitions in our dear old schools'), retrograde progressiveness (when one 'adapts' a classic, one must 'clarify' it, give it 'modern resonances', an old argument justly refuted by Barthes in his 1955 piece 'How to perform the classics?'). So, a sublimated concentration of decadent, depressed non-reading. (Author's note.)

10 'Just as the branches of a hyperbole meet, it is said, in infinity (though no one has ever visited such a distant region), so the principle of ideograms meets in a fourth sphere: the theatre.' The greatest possible care is required here. One can make Eisenstein say roughly what one wants by extracting a formula, a proposition from its context and from a movement which, in the displacement it imposes on the extract, can have the effect of modifying it, transforming (or even reversing) it. (And the same is true of Artaud and Mallarmé; otherwise the critical idealist inflation and metaphysical recuperation would not, with reference to them, have been so considerable and so insistent.) We don't mean that Eisenstein avoided the idealist temptation to see in the cinema a potential synthesis of the other arts; *quite the contrary*. None the less, in numerous areas of his work, Eisenstein rigorously recorded the notion of the 'theatrical scene' which occupies us here. (Author's note.)

11 André Bazin, 'Théâtre et Cinéma', in *Esprit*, June and July-August 1951, trans. in Bazin, '*What is Cinema?' Volume 1*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1967.

12 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Spivak, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.

13 We have had, on a number of occasions in this text, to write the name of Mallarmé in connection with Straub's work. Not by way of analogy, nor simply for purposes of quotation. Perhaps in order to signal a meeting in the metaphorical circulation of a certain general *écriture* which we have already referred to and to which we shall return. What stroke of fortune made Straub begin his film *Othon* (even before the title and the credits) with a movement of the camera ending mysteriously at a grotto where, during the last world war, the Italian communists hid their weapons? A grotto on the basis of which it is impossible to leave unmentioned, given the filmic contrivance it introduces, those other *grotto effects* noted by Derrida in the text of Mallarmé, about which he writes (in *Tel Quel*, no. 42): 'Grotto effects are more often than not glottal effects, traces of an echo, imprint of one phonic signifier on another, production of meaning in accordance with the resonances of a double membrane . . .' (Author's note.)

Derrida's 'La double séance', referred to here, appeared in two parts in *Tel Quel* (nos 41–2, 1970). Derrida presented the text in two sessions to the Groupe d'Etudes Théorique in 1969. The article derives from a reciprocal reading of Plato's *Philebus* and Mallarmé's 'Mimique' (*Oeuvres complètes*, p. 310). Speaking reductively, the concluding paragraph of Narboni's essay and this last note refer us to Mallarmé's interest in Plato's cave (*The Republic*), but more specifically to the play of book and theatre, text (book and/or libretto) and performance (thus a dual reading or performance), as well as to the relation of the written to the unwritten (cf. J. Scherer, *Le 'Livre' de Mallarmé, Premières recherches sur des documents inédits*, Paris, 1957). (Translator's note.)

11 Jean-Louis Comolli: 'Film/Politics (2): *L'Aveu*: 15 Propositions'

('Film/politique (2): *L'Aveu*: 15 propositions', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 224, October 1970)

Field

We feel that further study of the relation film/politics is indispensable,[1] not only because this relation provokes such an infinite variety of resistances,[2] but also because it seems to us a crucial if not prior obligation to drive into the open those confusions which so often muddle the criticism of the political determinations, roles and discourses of films. 1 Let us therefore offer a first proposition: *it is precisely here, in the relation film/politics, that we can distinguish not only the place of films in the dominant relations of production and in the ideology which dominates in their name, but also the place of the films' spectators* (among them, and most particularly, the 'critics').

Since, owing to its lack of density, *L'Aveu* never functions as a text resistant to ideological readings, but on the contrary as a *programme* designed in advance to promote these readings, being itself programmed and formulated by the ideological themes and modes which support them, the film carries implications for everything – questions and answers – which is problematical in the film/politics field.

2 Let us thus advance a second proposition, corollary to the first: given the present state of theoretical reflection on the problematic of film/politics – that is, the present state of the possibilities of effecting a truly political reading of films which develop a political practice and/or discourse (and taking into account, among other things, the real state of the forces present in the specific field of cinema and in the fields which encompass it, as well as the degree of progress in the political struggle) – it is not possible, in the name of theoretical purity or rigour, simply to dismiss as totally worthless the mass of films for which *L'Aveu* and Z might (and do) serve as models. These films are certainly not the site of any cinematographic work, any signifying practice capable of subverting the aesthetic-cultural norms of the domi-

nant ideology; but *for that very reason* they stand at the centre of the ideological stage and participate massively in the general ideological confusion, playing the part of a great many spectators and virtually all the critics[3] of authentically political films.

To clear the film/politics field of these exercises in confusion and camouflage, which screen out even the possibility of questioning its problematic in political terms – i.e. ultimately *of constituting it as a genuine problematic at all* – we must not behave 'as if' these films did not exist; quite the contrary, we must begin by taking account of them. To consider seriously *L'Aveu* (for example) is to consider not only as not negligible but as symptomatic the reactions, readings and criticism
3 to which it has given rise. For our third proposition is as follows: the less the reading of a film can be attributed to its *écriture*, and connected to its signifying system in a relation of production, the more the reading 'passes through' the film, thereby demonstrating its lack of density, and the more the film's 'reality', *its maximum weight of condensation, lies in the weight and reality of its readings, so that what we need to read is no longer the 'film' but rather that which constitutes it: its readings.*

Question

If we take *Othon, Sotto il segno dello Scorpione, Eros + Massacre, Ice* (for example) to be unequivocally political films, it is because they (we) are not satisfied with the pure and simple delivery of a 'political message'. *Beginning at the beginning* (which is also one of the conditions of political analysis), these films carry out on their *very materiality* – that of the signifiers they put into play, as well as that of the conditions and
4 means of production of these signifiers – *a scriptural work which, as such, constitutes political work.* This fourth proposition comes from Walter Benjamin: 'The tendency of a work can be politically just only if it is literally just. That is to say that the politically just tendency includes a literary tendency. . . . Instead of asking oneself what is the position of a work with respect to the relations of production of the period – is it in agreement with them, is it reactionary; or does it aspire to their transformation, is it revolutionary? – instead of this question, or at least *prior to it,* I would like to propose another. Before asking myself what is the position of a literary work *with respect to* the relations of production of the period, I would like to ask what is its place *in* these same relations? This question is aimed directly at the function devolving upon the work at the centre of a period's literary relations of production. In other words, it is aimed directly at literary *technique*. . . . An author who teaches nothing to writers teaches nothing to anyone.'[4]

Now, unlike those films which force viewers and critics to consider their political importance by demanding that they work at reading them – i.e., that they engage in a violent ideological struggle – *L'Aveu*

is totally reducible to the transmission-reception of its 'political mess-
5 age'. So much so that, in accordance with proposition number 4, *its political discourse is itself reductive*, and its political substance is what is called in question by its cinematographic lack of substance.

A certain number of progressive critics – critics *sure*, that is, of being equal to appreciating the relation of a film to politics, certainly of spotting the presence of political discourse in a film – feel called upon to ask (us) the following question about *Othon*, for instance; 'If Straub really meant *Othon* as a political film, why make it an unintelligible, "inaudible" film, so that the difficulty of hearing and thus of reading encumbers and considerably obstructs the reception of any political message?' Let us now reverse the question. *L'Aveu* contains no productive work at the level of its signifiers and thus – *since it is one and the same work* – never calls into question the conditions of production/*écriture*/diffusion/reading of the film (i.e., 'its place in the relations of production'), with the result that the film's 'political message' is blatant, overwhelming, 'accessible to everyone'. Our question: does not this accessibility indicate precisely the limits of the message, does it not reveal the film's true place at the centre of the political fogginess and obfuscation produced by the dominant ideology? The very blatancy of the film's political discourse, in whose name ('seriousness of the subject', 'urgency of the problem', etc.) one is quite ready to count the aesthetic proceedings as 'minor', serves above all as a political guarantee, and the 'political discourse' itself serves as an ideological *énoncé* – that is, as ideological static – from the moment when the film's authors fail to do the preliminary work *politically* necessary to all political discourse: a questioning of its conditions of existence and of its means. As their 'solution', the authors of *L'Aveu* choose to repress this questioning and suppress this work by a pure and simple acceptance of the conditions and means already there, in place, by the renewal of the dominant economic/cultural system, the *reproduction* of the means, techniques and forms of dominant production in cinema.[5]

Sixth proposition: what *else* could be produced by a cumbersome
6 reproduction of the methods and forms under and through which the dominant ideology circulates and prevails in cinema (and not only there)? Any 'political discourse' can only be *deformed* (reduced/reductive) by adopting those forms and means of expression and diffusion *whose given function is to reproduce the modes and through them the themes of the dominant ideology*.[6] Both the dominant system of production-diffusion in cinema and the aesthetic-cultural codes whose domination it assures appear to have but one *goal* – to permit and organize the creation and circulation of cultural objects and/or profits. But in fact
7 they *both* have a *primary* task, a *preliminary function*: to secure by their *reproduction* those very conditions which permit them to operate, those conditions necessary to their functioning, their hegemony, their *survival*, the maintenance and progress of their domination, *upon whose*

perpetuation closely depends the possibility of realizing their economic and/or cultural goal. Indeed their domination is itself a function of the perpetuation – the reproduction – of the dominant ideology, one of whose instruments it is. Even if masked, undeclared, this top priority task (reproduction of the system, reproduction of the ideological conditions necessary to the reproduction of the dominant relations of 8 production[7]) *overlays and thus dictates the takeover by the film of all political discourse.* We are dealing here with a sort of *double link between the* 9 *film and the dominant ideology*: principal link (masked, automatic) = reproduction of the conditions of domination of the ideology, that is, of the economic and aesthetic-cultural norms and codes by means of which it is installed and inculcated; secondary link (declared, contingent) = transmission (approving *or* critical) of a certain number of ideological themes. It is immediately obvious that the work of the film 10 must focus on the principal link, making of it a *principal contradiction.* Otherwise, *this contradiction remains secondary* and does not sufficiently challenge the process of reproduction of the dominant ideology's modes of inculcation, or indeed the ideological themes which are their effects. And this is so whether or not the film's political discourse contradicts the themes of the dominant ideology.

Thus, since *L'Aveu* never posed the preliminary question of its own field, of the means and methods of its production/*écriture*-diffusion/reading, *what we must question is this lack, this omission* – which leads us to question (since it is one and the same thing) the validity, the resistance of the film's political discourse, indeed even the degree to which its political discourse exists. The very question asked of *Othon*. The difference being that those who ask it of *Othon* would not ask it of *L'Aveu*, since for them the existence of a political discourse in *Othon* is problematic, while this is not so in *L'Aveu*. Seemingly absent in *Othon*, political discourse seems present in *L'Aveu*. Is not what is at issue in this contradiction precisely the *illusion* of a political discourse? Do we not see the same ideological 'conception' of political cinema – and thus of politics – at work in each of these two cases?

Vision

Precisely because this question was not asked of *L'Aveu*, the debate 'on' the film could only take place *alongside* it, could only enter into the deceptive game (itself masking, from then on, the deceptive character) of the film's 'political discourse'. The debate could only accept, respond to and, by virtue of this acceptance-response, hide the fact that what poses as 'political discourse' is in reality an operation of ideological reduction and blurring of historical data and political experiences. It all happened as if, blinded by the heaviness of the 'political message', the critics had not, properly speaking, seen the film. As though they had passed through its signifying tissue (no matter how thin, it does exist) to fasten upon (to take shelter from) the film's system of referents: history, the experienced, ideologies at war, disparity of political arguments, etc.

It may seem in contradiction to proposition 3 that we should read as a signifying system the 'point of maximum condensation' of a film, which in this case is the network of its readings. But in order to read these readings and not simply to remark upon them, we must start by examining what allowed them to be constituted into a signifying system in place of the film; which is (something to which these readings all turn a blind eye) the 'point of maximum condensation' of the film, the thinness and paucity of its own signifying system. To read these readings in place of the film is to focus in the first place on the why of this replacement and the how of the film's constitution as the contrary of a *text*, as a *programme* for/by its readings. By confining themselves to the overwhelmingly present sphere of political referents and signifieds in *L'Aveu*, any attempt at critical reading (like that of Claude Morgan in *Le Monde*) could only circle round the essential lack and contradiction of the film, could see only its effects and not what produces them, which is *not only* a lack at the level of the 'political message' (the confusion between Stalinism and communism, the concealment of the causes of Stalinism), but even more basically at the level of the film's signifying system.

Everything holds together: it is because *L'Aveu* never questions the representational system which dominates the cinema, founded on the ideology of the visible, the auto-satisfaction of the *shown*, that it cannot call upon anything other than the 'shown', the 'given to be seen', an illustrative series of *effects* whose sole possibility of organization is infinite repetition, accumulation, self-justification by their own reproduction, a system symbolized by trials and prefabricated confessions which the film is supposed to discredit, but whose forms and practices it can only go along with, since it proceeds like the system itself from a concealment of all causes, logic, pertinence, from a proliferation of 'proofs' which are such only because avowed, manifested, required – *shown as such*.

Determined without even its own knowledge, ruled by the aesthetic and technical codes of a conception and practice of cinema as representation of the lived, reproduction of the tangible, illustration of the visible, the signifying system of *L'Aveu* is reduced to the intensive, desperate exploitation of *signs of presence*. Everything must be 'received' by the spectator as though happening before his eyes, in his presence, in a 'present' which tries to pass itself off as that of the 'real' (and not of a film). Signs of presence – that is, indissociably, signs of illusion. The spectator's look is programmed, taken over by the insistent play of looks, of the looked-at/looking. To see Montand-London in the secrecy of his cell, suffering from being watched, spied upon by his guards, amounts for the spectator to seeing him as they do and to

suffering from it as he does, simultaneously, in the same act of looking.
11 Here, as always, the process of identification between spectator and central character is only possible through the effects of the real and the lived in a participation and a mutual presence which are necessarily illusory, fantasized. At this primary level, the level of its very vision, the film functions as a trap and a swindle. The spectator does not occupy the place of a reader, but that (those) of an accomplice – *the place of the witness, of the One, of the double* – places marked out in advance, reserved in the simulacrum as that which completes it, validates it, renders it operative; that is, ratifies, aids and permits, *confirms*
12 *its function as a snare.* Without this complicity on the part of the spectator (provided for and programmed) the performance fails. It is only from that instant when the spectator is caught in the illusion of being *the one for whom the film is made, the one who is present, at the centre of things* (the 'same' place as the hero) *as subject,* that the representation becomes *the spectator's* representation – i.e., that ideological inculcation can be effected.

L'Aveu's frantic pursuit (cloaked so reassuringly, so prudently, in the 'sobriety', the 'dignity' of the style, the pernicious mask put on most often, and not only in the cinema, by the symbolic violence of the dominant ideology) of the spectator's highly emotional participation in the spectacle of the succession of tortures, aims – by making these tortures odious – solely at making the spectator an accomplice to their spectacle and to the very principle of the spectacle. The tortures are filmed in so insistent a way – to the point where the *entire film* functions like torture, mobilizing our feelings of horror and impotence ('Confess, but confess to what?') – solely in order to provoke the repulsion-gratification of their very visibility. Moved by *what* he sees, *because* he sees it, the spectator becomes a voyeur. A blocked conflict ensues, impossible to transcend: in order to have the spectator condemn the Stalinist 'horror', it is shown in all its hysteria, it is set up as a spectacle, without any inkling that to see is to take pleasure in, that to increase the visibility of this horror, its effect of presence, is inevitably to reduce the knowledge of it, the possibility of criticizing it. But is this not, perhaps, precisely what was in play in *L'Aveu* (and it is not a question here of the authors' 'intentions', their unimpeachable integrity, but rather of what it is that speaks in a film, the codes, the signifying system, the ideology – which have no 'intentions' and call, not for moral judgments, but for political ones): namely, that the emotion, the feeling of horror, in short the humanist reflex action, is fully in play, and in play alone, to block any political reading *both* of the film *and* of Stalinism?

(One should have thought twice before dismissing the signifying system of *L'Aveu*, as the critics did unanimously, since the fact that it is nothing more than a constant repetition of effects of presence may account for its extreme poverty, but also explains why it carries extremely serious consequences. To repeat: in the relation film/politics, the lack in the field of 'film' is a lack – and the same lack – in the field of 'politics'.)

Reading

Nevertheless, it would seem from an examination of the press that *L'Aveu* gave rise to a great number of readings. It is therefore these which one must read (proposition 3), examining their substance, knowing now that all of them (to my knowledge) remained blind to the nature and the (serious) consequences of the signifying system of the film, to the ideology of the visible which it displays, and to the representational closure which it effects.

Not having taken the trouble to question the signifying materiality of the film, these readings can only bring together under the crude heading of 'material' the film's many referents, chief among them London's book, the ultimate guarantee – because it belongs to lived experience – of the film's political discourse. Let us set aside the sacrosanct 'problems of adaptation' (although they served quite well, in this instance, further to obscure the issue) and compare the two political discourses.

London's *political* purpose was to narrate the tragic part of his lived experience of Stalinism, and secondarily to try to furnish a certain number of political explanations (fragmentary, insufficient – but then London is not a Marxist theoretician): precisely those explanations he himself needed in order to understand what he had lived through and to be able to continue being a communist after, and despite, Stalin. Now, contrary to everything that has been said (even by London himself) about the 'faithfulness' of the film to the book, the purpose of *L'Aveu* (the film) is absolutely different. It is (cf. the section on 'Vision') to make the spectator (who may or may not be the book's reader) violently experience the horror London lived through, and described, but which by virtue of such a narration, by putting it into a book, he made into an *object of reading*, now one of the constituent elements not just of his lived experience, but also of his thinking about it and of the book which is its product. Quite clearly, the book offers a mass of details, characters, historical moments which it was not possible for the film to include (here the critics are prepared to take into account the specific constraints of the signifying materiality of cinema, in order to 'excuse' this inevitable deficiency in the film). But the book also offers, amid the very confusion of these facts, accounts, actions, etc., a certain number of explanations, fragments of political analysis, which by the very fact of their being scattered throughout the book, and by what they leave out, bear witness in their own way to the complexity of a scientific reading of history.

Of these attempts at analysis, the film – in order not to omit them

altogether – offers a parody, a gross caricature (scenes, at Monte Carlo, of the communist-bourgeois dialogue). There are several reasons for this. The authors of the film themselves 'confess' that these sequences function as intervals (safety valves, pauses) in the unbearable spectacle of the torturing of Montand-London. Which is to say the 'political explanations' they carry have the same value as ice cream and commercial intermissions: they distract, giving us the chance to get some strength back before returning to watch the ordeal. And indeed the audience does breathe a little fresh air during these brief ascents from Hell. But this also implies that they are offered, quite literally, as being off the subject. Because the film sacrifices everything to the production of emotion, of the showable, what seems to have occurred is that the level of explanation and reflection – in short, of reading – becomes *at one and the same time* negligible, secondary (since it does not lend itself to being 'shown', 'visualized' like an interrogation or a torture scene) and an embarrassment (since it would most certainly threaten, were it to be further developed, to break the oppressive chain of events binding the spectator). Such a sudden intrusion of political reading would be an embarrassment also because it would call into question, beyond its tangible effects, the *logic* of the film's signifying system. Because
13 that logic is the logic of *identity* (identification with the 'hero', *the one to whom the film is happening;* experience of the film as *identical* at every point with a programme), the logic of *substitution* (spectator for protagonist, real effects for filmic, vision for reflection), it sets in motion, in the name of idealism, a mechanical causality, a tautological circularity of explanations (questions-answers-questions). The confusion of causes-effects is then operative (in the very image of the Stalinist equation: confession = proof, which the film's discourse purely and simply reproduces and renews, far from making a deconstructive criticism of it). And all causes, since they inevitably reflect and lead back to each other, in a sterile mirroring, can only lead, in the last resort, to the Cause: Why the Stalinist horror? Because of Stalinism. Why Stalinism? Because of Stalin, who takes the place – in an 'anti-Stalinist' film, as in the theology of the Stalin era and the personality cult – of God the Father. (Here again, his *appearances*, the stock shots which show him and do nothing but show him, take the place of all discourse about him. The proof of Stalin is that one sees him!)

What is obstinately at work in this logic of the repetition of the same is the *impossibility of understanding*, the constituting of History as Mystery (the reverse side of the miracles of the Church). The spectator submits, as the character 'submits', as London submitted in his prisons, to the circle of questions-confessions, to the mechanics of the programme. And like the character and his model, assaulted, exhausted, imprisoned in the violence of the performance (as was London in the violence of what was also a performance and repetition of the staging of the Moscow trials, whose evocation in the film also plays the role of an explanation referring back to a mystery which is itself not explained), the spectator, bound up in his every fibre with Montand, blinded by precisely what he is seeing, having at his disposition as an aid to reflection on the historical referent only the assertive, tautological system – 'It's like this because that's how it was' – is never in a position to think through the filmic situations of which he is the victim; and the impossibility of thinking, on his part, is the exact copy of that which tortures the character in the film and which constitutes thereby one of the weapons in the inquisitorial arsenal of the Stalinist trials. *In* and *on L'Aveu*, for the spectator as for the protagonist, it is a question of repressing all possibility of analysis, of obstructing any science of history, of brandishing the thematics of equivalence (Prague '45 = Prague '68). The film calls itself anti-Stalinist, but because it has not thought out its own problematic in terms other than those of the representation and reproduction of the image of Stalinism, it 'investigates' the process of Stalinism in the same way as the 'referents'[8] investigated the citizens of Moscow, Budapest and Prague. Its signifying system, its idealist presuppositions, its conformity to the economic and cultural norms of the dominant ideology rewrite this anti-Stalinism in a purely formal way. Thus the 'political discourse' of *L'Aveu* is reduced to a simple marshalling of political fantasies. Preformed by the dominant ideology, the film serves as a vehicle for its discourse, one of whose privileged themes is the *Stalinist* use of Stalinism as anti-communism. It was indeed necessary to ask the question: is *L'Aveu* anti-communist? But to find the answer one could not enter into the film's deceptive game, could not rely on the elements the film marshals – history, the book, etc. – without permitting them to act otherwise than as authorities. One had to see that what is anti-communist here (as elsewhere) is not to speak of Stalinism (quite the contrary) but rather to maintain this conception of cinema *and* of politics.

Proposition

A film which has not examined its place in the relations of production, the economic-cultural status of the conditions and means of its specific practice – a film, that is, which has not thought through its writing and its reading, at the same time as its production and its diffusion, *in a relation of contradiction* with the economic-cultural norms of the dominant social system and its ideology – can do nothing other than reproduce both the economic norms and the cultural norms of production, and thus, in the moment of its fabrication, can only reduplicate the modes of formulation/inculcation of the dominant ideology. So much so that even if at the level of its declared 'political message' the film believes it is not restating the themes of this ideology, it reintroduces them in masked form, the form of their greatest violence, by reintroducing the ideology's modes of formulation and inculcation. The 'political' readings which have been made of *L'Aveu* – as divergent as they were – have in common an incapacity (which suggests a certain *political weakness* on their part) to perceive that in the film there were at issue neither 'truths' ('which must triumph', 'which must be told', etc.), nor 'lies', nor 'facts', nor 'analyses', in short no political discourse at all. Rather, in proportion to the weight of ideological determinations on the form and forms of the film, there is nothing more than an ideological disordering (still another) of political and historical givens and experiences. More than that, by opening a debate under these conditions on the 'political message' of the film and on that alone, these 'political' readings entered into the film's ideological game, responded to its programme, *by themselves functioning as a confirmation* 14 *and reproduction of their own arguments*. At this ideological level, the film can in fact serve them all, gathering them all in as would a mirror: that which sees is seen and sees itself. Thus these political readings obeyed in their field and in their own way the rule of recognition/miscognition which governs the film in the name of the dominant ideology.

As we have said, the lack at the level of 'film' is a lack at the level 15 of 'politics', *but what rushes into the breach* (and what conditions it) *is the dominant ideology*. This last, as we know, not being an abstraction but being truly dominant over film criticism (for example), it is not unimportant, though painful, to note that in the present case it manifests itself not only where one would expect to find it (the ORTF and the bourgeois press) but also, and not without entailing some contradiction, in the communist and leftist press.

We can see, then, that what has for some time now cluttered and confused the theoretical debate on (and the practice of) political cinema is the unwarranted but undeniable presence in the field of films like Z and *L'Aveu*, which continue to pass in almost all quarters for points of reference in this field. There is a certain amount of political and theoretical work to be done before another conception of political cinema (one which would exclude these films, among others) can dawn on those very people – progressives, political militants, spectators, critics or film-makers (among them the authors of *L'Aveu*, Costa-Gavras and Jorge Semprun) – who call for a political cinema. The urgency of this work appears all the greater because (like all theoretical practice) it conditions the possibility of re-thinking, in France today, the conditions of existence and the conception of a practice of political cinema extricated (as far as possible) from the economic and cultural models which reproduce the dominant ideology. *And that will be my last proposition.*

Translated by Nancy Kline Piore

Notes

1 Refer to and reread the text by Pascal Bonitzer ('Film/politics: *Camarades/Ice*', *Cahiers* 222), which situates a great number of the propositions considered here.

Also: 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism', *Cahiers* 216 and 217. (Author's note.) The first part of this latter text is translated in this volume, Ch. 3.

2 Resistances, to cite only minor examples, on the part of Teisseire (*L'Aurore*) and Claude Mauriac (*Le Figaro littéraire*), scandalized – like many others no doubt – by the fact that a 'film magazine', we reds, could 'start talking politics' . . . as though they, by talking about what they think to be 'cinema' and *only about that*, were not delivering in self-defence *only* an ideological, politically situated/situating discourse. (Author's note.)

3 The critical corpus examined: François Maurin (*L'Humanité*), Albert Cervoni (*France Nouvelle*), Michel Capdenac (*Les Lettres Françaises*), Claude Morgan (*Le Monde*), Bernard Féron (*Le Monde*), Paul-Louis Thirard (*Positif*), plus letters in *Nouvelle Critique*, *Unir pour le socialisme* and *Rouge*. (Author's note.)

4 Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer'. (Author's note.) Translated in *Understanding Brecht*, London, New Left Books, 1973.

5 This is why, when Louis Marcorelles wonders if the film would not have gained in political efficacy by being more 'readable', Straub can reply, missing the point, 'One should not add more grist to the mill'. (Author's note.)

6 See in this connection the text by Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses'. (Author's note.) Translated in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, London, New Left Books, 1971.

7 See the theses of Michel Verret on the 'personality cult' in *Théorie et politique*, Ed. Sociales. (Author's note.)

8 Ironically, in the Stalinist trials the name 'referents' is given to those people who fabricate questions-answers, obtain 'confessions', practise torture – those linked with the Party, the Outside . . . (Author's note.)

12 Collective text: 'Josef von Sternberg's *Morocco*'

('*Morocco*, de Josef von Sternberg', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 225, November-December 1970)

> When we consider all this, we can well understand why at the moment Hollywood is the navel of the earth, being the only place where people think of nothing else but amusing the rest of the world, turning out those sows ears we take for silk purses . . . Hollywood is also the last boudoir where philosophy, become masochistic, can still find that laceration to which, fundamentally, it aspires: as by virtue of an unavoidable illusion it seems impossible, in fact, to discover anywhere else in the world women so unnatural, gross, impossible. The fact is that daily the whole world casts money at their feet so that they won't desert us, just as once it did at the feet of statues of gods or saints. A melancholy way of trusting the heart's salvation to a mirage of tinsel.
>
> Georges Bataille

I Method

1 The present article continues our work on the re-reading of the classic Hollywood cinema which was initiated by our text on John Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln* (*Cahiers* 223).[1] We saw Ford's film as exemplary in that it showed an ideological enounced [*énoncé*][2] subverted by the stress effects of the Fordian writing [*écriture*]. *Young Mr Lincoln* represented the ethical-political face of the capitalist and theological field of Hollywood cinema. *Morocco* on the other hand represents its erotic face, as a film that takes its place within the Sternberg oeuvre – an oeuvre produced by Hollywood, for forty years the major site of production of the erotic (fetishist) myths of bourgeois society and, as such, itself fetishized and mythologized.

In other words, our reading of *Morocco* will distinguish the effects – inscribed with exceptional clarity here, even for Hollywood – implied by its kinship (the modes of which will be examined) with the bourgeois (but equally feudal) fictions produced by Judaeo-Christian civilization, founded on the Law of the Father, and characterized particularly by the role assigned to the woman.

On this point we will cite what Julia Kristeva has written on the historical transition (in the fourteenth century) from the epic enounced to that of the novelesque; in other words, the transition from a civilization of the symbol to a civilization of the sign (in *Semiotica*, I, IV, 1969: 'Narration et Transformation'). The novelesque model and the system of the sign she describes have, despite the deconstruction to which they have been subjected, continued to be dominant and were especially so in Hollywood in 1930. Kristeva defines the transition in question as marked by the 'justification of one only of the terms of opposition: the Other (the woman), into which the One[3] (the Author, the Man) projects himself and with which he fuses. An exclusion of the Other is immediately produced which inevitably presents itself as an exclusion of the woman, a non-recognition of sexual and social opposition.' Within this system, Woman is a 'pseudo-centre, a mystificatory centre, a blind spot whose value is invested in the One, who gives himself the Other (the centre) in order to live as one, single and unique. From this flows the exclusively positive quality of the blind centre (the Woman) which reaches the infinite (in nobility, and "qualities of the heart") effacing disjunction (sexual difference) and dissolving into a series of *images* (from angel to Virgin). . . . the idealization of the woman (the Other) signifies a society's refusal to shape itself by acknowledging the *differential* but *non-hierarchical status* of the opposed groups, and equally, that society's structural need to give itself a permutative centre, an *other* entity whose only value is that of *object of exchange* among equals. . . . This devaluing valorization prepares the ground for, and does not basically distinguish itself from, the explicit devaluation of which woman was the object from the fourteenth century onwards in bourgeois literature (in medieval verse tales, satires and farces).' As we know, such devaluation is reasserted quite particularly in Hollywood mythology (the ingénue, the vamp, the femme fatale). Here the 'pseudo-centre' Kristeva speaks of is the *fetish*, and our text will attempt to distinguish all its occurrences in Sternberg's film (cf. IV.2). This reciprocal absorption of the One and the Other (the Author and the Woman) within an effacement of sexual difference accounts for (and implies) the fact that the Masquerade, Virile Display and Inversion[4] are the erotic paradigms of *Morocco* (cf. Lacan, 'La signification du phallus':'Paradoxical as this formulation may seem, I am saying that it is in order to be the phallus, that is to say, the signifier of the desire of the Other, that a woman will reject an essential part of femininity, namely all her attributes in the masquerade'; and 'The fact that femininity finds its refuge in this mask by virtue of the fact of the repression (*Verdrängung*) inherent in the phallic mark of desire, has the curious consequence of making virile display in the human being itself seem feminine').

2 In *Young Mr Lincoln* the diegetic process (the progressive setting in place of a device functioning as a snare, the substitution of one mode of narration for another in the course of the fiction, the narrative *coups de force* involving a decisive role for the diachronic dimension[5]) called for a reading in terms of its chronological development, since the fictional structures in it were transformed by the narration. In *Morocco*, inversely, as we shall

see, the structures of the fiction (cf. section II) are programmed from the outset and are simply repeated with variations in their successive realizations. This justifies us in considering *Morocco* as a text which can be read synchronically, since the key determinations of the fiction can all legitimately be brought together at once within a complete set of their realizations.

II Structure of the fiction

1 To elaborate the structures of a fiction like *Morocco*, we cannot but base ourselves on what constitutes its major enounced: the fictional 'novelesque' situations considered within their double – erotic and social – determination (the La Bessière-Amy Jolly-Brown triangle, and the secondary triangle, Caesar-Mme Caesar-Brown). And in fact, the erotic relations occur within the framework of a rigorously delineated social situation which is not a neutral backdrop, but which, on the contrary, *determines these erotic relations and is in turn determined by them*. In other words: the double erotic/social determination of the fictional situations, and the *double inscription* of the discourse of *Morocco*, are such that their reciprocal determining relations are articulated according to a *logic* (impossible to abstract from the text without relapsing into mechanistic structuralism) which is internal to the scriptural process, and distinguishable in the recurring effects of meaning produced by this double inscription.

2 The *social determinations* of the different characters and the relations these generate between them are organized according to a strict hierarchy which we will describe here while clearly accepting (see II. 1) that this hierarchy is going to be perverted by the erotic determinations. From top to bottom of the social scale within the fiction we have: (a) the European upper middle class (La Bessière: rich enough to 'buy up all Morocco', 'citizen of the world', dilettante painter – 'He would be a good painter if he were not so rich'); (b) the colonial upper middle class (the group of La Bessière's friends who, at the cabaret, are shocked by the 'democratic tastes' of La Bessière, who leaves them to go and sit at Caesar's table; guests at the dinner party to celebrate the engagement, including a general in the French Army); (c) the native bourgeoisie; (d) officers of the Legion (Captain Caesar); (e) the owner of the cabaret, who occupies an intermediary position between the other categories (see IV); (f) the lower strata, i.e. the (miserably paid) legionnaires, the Moroccan crowds, the dancers-singers-prostitutes of the cabaret, and the women of the Legion's 'rearguard'.

It should be noted that while the masculine characters of the fiction have a fixed social status (not modified by the erotic determinations), the social position of the women is fluid: Mme Caesar seems to have been through the experience of a drop on the social ladder before her marriage replaced her within category (d); Amy Jolly, herself fallen – from a relatively elevated rank (at least in terms of wealth, e.g. reference to her mink coat) – to category (f), is again to be promoted to the highest position by the circumstance of her coming marriage to La Bessière, and again drops to the lowest to become one of the 'women without hope' who follow the soldiers.

3 As for the *erotic determinations*, these set up two homologous triangles: La Bessière-Amy Jolly-Brown; Caesar-Mme Caesar-Brown. The erotic situations inscribed in these two triangles are in their turn over-determined socially; in other words, the set of relations to which the situations of these characters give rise are inscribed into the pattern of *Morocco* and at the same time produce it (the reciprocal interaction indicated above).

It is possible to see a series of homologous relationships:

> La Bessière, diffident lover of Amy Jolly/Caesar, the deceived husband;
> Amy Jolly/Mme Caesar, both equally déclassé by their deviant erotic behaviour which assimilates them with the prostitutes;
> Amy Jolly, in love with Brown although courted by La Bessière and then engaged to him/Mme Caesar, also in love with Brown, i.e. with a man hierarchically inferior to her husband.

In other words, in all cases the object of desire is of inferior status to the desiring subject:

> La Bessière, in love with a fallen woman, has perhaps also been the lover of Mme Caesar;
> Caesar is deceived by a wife of whom there is every ground for supposing that before her marriage she was in the same situation as Amy Jolly;
> Amy Jolly and Mme Caesar both pursue a déclassé man, Brown.

The inscription of these hierarchical erotic relations brings into play:

(i) Europeans with social status/déclassé Europeans:

> La Bessière-Mme Caesar
> La Bessière-Amy Jolly
> Caesar-Mme Caesar
> Mme Caesar-Brown
> Amy Jolly-Brown

(Although, like Brown, they belong to the category of the déclassés, Mme Caesar and Amy Jolly have, have had, or could have, access to a higher social rank – a possibility from which Brown seems to be excluded, which 'downgrades' him in relation to them.)

(ii) Europeans/Moroccans:

> Legionnaires-Moroccan women

We will simply note a point here, in order to return to it later (cf. IV. 1) – the interaction between (i) and (ii). For example the ambiguity of Mme Caesar's racial type and dress, the character she plays in a sense representing a compromise between the Europeanness incarnated by Amy Jolly (Aryan) and the 'orientalness' (Morocco = Other than the West) incarnated in the fiction by the Moroccans whose dress she adopts.

4 Moreover, the play of the double, erotic-social, web is not produced independently of its *topographical* inscription. This inscription is effected along two axes: one vertical, and – within the Town – linking (by establishing a hierarchy) the High (La Bessière's palace) to the Low (the cabaret), while the cabaret itself is divided into a 'high' and a 'low' (the pit); the other, horizontal (Town/Desert).

5 (a) The movement of desire works from high to low: towards the lower strata (cabaret, prostitutes); (b) access to the desert implies a passage through the lower strata: in particular, Amy Jolly only gets there after having first found and then re-found Brown, in the cabaret and then in a seedy café; (c) it is therefore *in the depths* that desiring subjects discover the *object* of their desire; and in the fiction, the desert is inscribed as the pure *signifier* of that desire – that is, as a mirage, a snare, always evoked but never shown until the final scene. Thus in Amy Jolly's room when Brown wishes to provoke her desire he literally 'lures' her with an evocation of the desert (he goes to the window and says 'you can smell the desert this evening' and then runs his fingers through his hair). The inscription of the Legion and Brown as 'vanishing' (see IV,2) is a correlative of the desert's function as a snare: cf. the remark by La Bessière about the women camp followers: 'And very often when they do (catch up with them) they find their men dead.'

6 The fictional matrix we have just established (social/erotic/topographical determinations) is not specific to this film, nor to Sternberg – even though some of the modes of its inscription are specific (cf. IV). It emerges as a variation and transformation of a structure whose other occurrences could be distinguished equally well in (a) popular novels of the beginning of the century (indeed even in *La Recherche du temps perdu*), (b) in numerous films produced between the beginning of the cinema and the 1930s (Feuillade, Murnau, Lang, etc.). The transformation lies mainly in the fact that the fictional axis (High/Low – Desirer/Desired) is here divided in two (High/Low + Town/Desert); the relation Town/Desert emerged as an ideological re-marking of the structure (ideological in the sense that the structuring function of the twofold erotic-sociological determination is almost masked by the fact that the over-inscription of the horizontal Town/Desert axis is reduced to a purely erotic fantasy – the return to Nature as the locus of desire, as opposed to the town). It should be recalled that *Morocco* was produced, seen, and continues to be seen, solely as a love film (cf. its French title: *Coeurs brûlés*), and moreover that it to some extent borrows its fictional elements from the melodrama genre.

As far as the effects of this transformation are concerned, they emerge within a process of inscription which operates with the aid of constantly reduplicated batteries of signifiers:

Europeans - Moroccans (cf. 2);
Old World - New World: Brown typed as an American, in opposition to La Bessière and Caesar who are men of Old Europe;
Characters with social status/déclassé or displaced characters;
Even at the visual level: grids and screens (towns)/uniform white expanse (desert).

These effects consist in redoubled journeys (cabaret – desert; desert – cabaret); in a proliferation of rhymes and inversions (which are implicated in the structural relations here, and are not just a decorative surplus as in the case of other Sternberg films). They also consist in characters who produce a *mediation* between the two axes and the multiple sets of signifiers which overdetermine them. This does not necessarily mean that these characters have the function of 'intermediaries' *in the fiction* (as is the case for La Bessière and the owner of the cabaret, cf. IV. 1), but that they ensure within the logic of the text a mixing of erotic and/or racial determinations (for example, Mme Caesar, cf. 3; the owner of the cabaret 'Lo Tinto', cf. IV. 1).

III Mythological determinations

1 In the forefront of the mythological determinations is the historical role of the star in the Hollywood system and its articulation within the Sternbergian fiction. It can be said of any star that the process of fetishistic eroticization which defines them as such assigns them a relatively restricted number of possible types of fiction in which their presence then has the function of *operator*:[6] the fictional elements of the star-film are to a large extent the reinvestment of what a star's preceding films and, equally, extra-filmic life have inscribed as a *role* credited to the particular actor or actress. But instead of confirming the specialization implied by such repetition, the inscription on the contrary seeks to mask it and to present it as difference, indeed as a 'first time'; from one film to the next, the presence of the star transcends the filmic/extra-filmic opposition, but the films themselves emerge as a constant denial of that transcendence, while at the same time making use of the recognition effects it implies: here, for instance, as in her preceding film *The Blue Angel*, and in her extra-filmic life, Marlene is a cabaret singer.

(a) The effects of recognition are therefore produced by her status as cabaret singer with reference to *The Blue Angel*, as well as by the inscription within the fiction of the transformation wrought upon her by Sternberg (multiple allusions to her recent worldly past). The heroine thus enjoys a capital of past history (wealth, erotic success) which she is progressively to squander – the production of these effects of recognition being directly overdetermined by the mythology and the themes set in motion by Sternberg, which are precisely those of 'fall' and squandering.

(b) In fictional terms, the operation of denial is inscribed by setting in motion a double principle of variation:
The scene where Marlene appears produces a *narrative and iconographical* break in the sense that: (1) the preceding scene (the Legion's arrival in town, Tom Brown arranging a meeting with a Spanish woman) is interrupted just at the point of follow-up (shot of the raised hands of a dancer holding castanets which is left unexplained); (2) it is succeeded by an empty shot of the port (noise of a siren) which functions like a placard announcing the not very readable scene that follows; (3) iconographically, this scene is produced in paradigmatic opposition to the entire beginning of the film: sun/night, dry/damp, land/sea, dust/mist; i.e.South/North; (4) it is to be read as flowing from a previous fiction (the arrival of Marlene in Morocco is explicitly presented as the substitute for a suicide, the dénouement of the absent fiction).

While Marlene is, as in *The Blue Angel*, a cabaret singer, the singer status is here socially and erotically overdetermined in an inverse sense to *The Blue Angel*: the cabaret-suicide association implies a defeat which puts Amy Jolly in closer analogy with Professor Unrat than with Lola Lola, and this clearly is bound to have some connection with the Amy Jolly-Brown erotic relation.

This double process of recognition-denial confers on the star a fictional place which is obviously determining for the dramatic level, but one that is played out less as an *activity* than as its *deferment*.

In other words, by her inscription within the fiction, her incarnation as protagonist, her placement in relation with other characters, the star compromises her identity-in-itself (her being-as-star) and puts into play her 'value'. The inscription therefore consists in a *deferment* of her signification (her 'value') as star within the production of a *surplus* (her becoming *actress* and *protagonist*); a surplus which is however transferred back to her credit in so far as the fictional effects produced (by her gestures, the course she traces in the film, her relations with the other characters) are in the last analysis constrained to signify her as 'star'. This is marked by the *austerity of the star's acting* (parsimony of gesture, restricted number of partners, a closing-off – particularly accentuated in Sternberg – of the fictional place which serves like a display-case); in other words few fictional effects are produced which are not required to *valorize* her.

Sternberg's films occupy a particular place within the star system because it was Sternberg himself who produced Marlene as star, in contrast to the majority of Hollywood film-makers (including some of the greatest) who ultimately did no more than ensure the circulation of the value we have just discussed. What does Sternberg himself say about this? 'Don't tell me that Marlene fills my work, that she runs away with it, that she possesses it and drives it . . . Marlene is not Marlene in my films, let's get that clear. Marlene is not Marlene, Marlene is me, and she knows that better than anyone.' (*Cahiers* 168). Such assertions, which seem to denigrate the star system, in fact do no more than reflect its ideology, while at the same time perverting it, inasmuch as the author Sternberg appropriates to himself the value of the star, which he can thenceforward only consider as the devalued surplus of his work. So that if he speaks of her as fetish, it can only be in the mode of a violent denial.

This fantasy representation by Sternberg of his relations with Marlene is inscribed in all the key moments of the fiction of *Morocco*, on the one hand in the character of La Bessière, who is, first of all physically, Sternberg's double. From the start (scene of the arrival of the boat), La Bessière sets himself up as the protector and suitor of Marlene (he gives her his card – i.e. his name). Thereafter, La Bessière is insistently presented as a man who does not want to be taken over by a woman (he has the reputation of being a hardened bachelor); he does nothing to hold back Amy Jolly and even drives her to Brown in his car. In other words, he himself pushes to its limits the process of devaluation of Amy Jolly which has been indicated from the beginning of the film. On the other hand these same fantasies of devaluation are inscribed in the relation between Amy Jolly and Brown, who first identifies her with the prostitutes he habitually frequents ('I always pay for what I get'), and considers her on their model as his thing – an assimilation which the end of the film renders effective. And this can be related to the following statement by Sternberg: 'When I finished *The Blue Angel* I had finished with Marlene. I didn't want to make another film with her. But she followed me back on to home territory as most women do, and I had to direct her in *Morocco*.'

2 Another type of Sternberg fantasy has to be taken into account, which constitutes a masochistic variant on the one just described: the fantasy of abandonment (La Bessière is abandoned by Amy Jolly in the same way that Caesar is deceived by his wife). Both fantasies have a structuring function in the fiction inasmuch as they directly determine the erotic situations, but also inscribe themselves in the breaks in the fiction in an unpredictable and emphatic way:

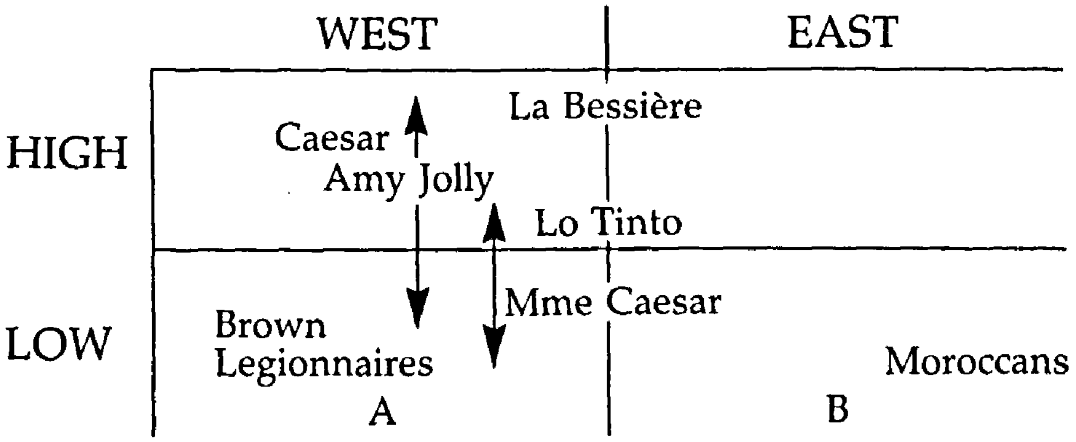
> when Caesar, having vainly attempted to make Brown confess, himself utters his wife's name in front of all the protagonists;
>
> in the same way, in front of his guests, La Bessière confesses his absolute submission to the caprices of Amy Jolly ('You see . . . I love her; I'd do anything to make her happy)'.

These two scenes, in their term-for-term correspondence to each other, produce a double transgressive effect: a transgression of the social codes through public admission of distress, of defeat, of irremediable loss, above all when this is located in the erotic order; and equally, transgression of the Hollywood fictional codes to the extent that these, to meet the dramatic requirements, reassert those social codes (telling a story means postponing the confession, solution, cause, etc.).

In so far as these fantasies systematically devalue the object of desire *and* pose that object as unattainable, they are able to have a structuring action in a fictional field where a hierarchy of relations is inscribed that goes as far as their total disjunction.

IV Inscription[7]

1 The inscription of the signifiers of Westernness and Easternness. (This diagram only takes into account the 'characters' involved in the overdetermined social-erotic relations outlined in II. 3.)



In their physical typing, Amy Jolly and Caesar represent the old world of (northern) Europe (they are 'Aryans');

Brown (the name, gestural typing) represents the New World;

Easternness is only represented by the Moroccan women (dancers, singers, prostitutes, the 'rearguard');

Although the Moroccans feature episodically in the fiction (crowds at prayer, high bourgeoisie, Mme Caesar's hired men beaten up by Brown), they do not enter into the erotic relations which constitute the fictional web;

La Bessière, presented as French, is placed in A for the same reason as Amy Jolly and Caesar; however, physically he is a Latin (Amy Jolly and Caesar are Nordic). Moreover, as a Frenchman *he has a relationship with Morocco* (Amy Jolly and Caesar have run aground there and remain alien to it except, in the case of Amy Jolly, for the last shot). He has a *knowledge* of Morocco (implied in his status as one of the master class, the correlative of a blindness – his knowledge is exclusively concerned with the 'horizontal axis', cf. II. 6 – he knows what the 'rearguard' is, but is ignorant of the 'crimes of the lower orders');

Finally two characters who are intermediary between A and B: Mme Caesar (cf. II. 4), and the owner of the cabaret, Lo Tinto – a Levantine, strongly typed in dress and physique (ridiculous evening dress, ring in his ear).

(a) It is worth recalling that on the level of social determinations, the three characters who represent the Old World have, or have had, an elevated social position. While Brown, who represents the New World, occupies the lowest position on the scale of representatives of Westernness (without there ever being any allusion made to his drop on the social scale).

On the other hand, the Moroccans occupy the lowest position on the scale of representatives of Easternness.

(b) On the level of erotic determinations, in conformity with a Western mythological tradition, an exclusively feminine value is assigned to the East.

The relationship of femininity to virility undergoes an inversion with reference to the phallocentric fantasy of bourgeois society (an inversion whose relative frequency in bourgeois *fictions* is moreover notable) by virtue of the fact that Brown (cf. (a)) occupies a very much inferior social position and is the object of Amy Jolly's desire.

Note that Lo Tinto's mixed race, like La Bessière's morphotype, are correlatives of their signs of inversion (the preciosity of La Bessière's behaviour and gestures, Lo Tinto's portly physique and his mother-cum-pimp behaviour *vis à vis* Amy Jolly).

Their inscription into the fictional situation makes the three characters representing the Old World signifiers of castration: La Bessière and Caesar inasmuch as they lose their women, Marlene as fetish (cf. 2; the impossibility of a return to Europe for Brown is linked to the fact that civilian dress *would signify* his castration).

The dynamics of the fiction put the women into circulation from West to East and from the Old World to the New: it is the American who has all the women, who themselves rejoin the Orient as their mythic locus.

2 As we have seen (cf. 1) the critique of the fetishism of value, in an 'artistic' discourse produced within the capitalist system (and indeed in a location – Hollywood – where fetishism is subject to a displacement, from commodity onto characters, which generalizes the circulation of exchange value onto bodies and individuals), is carried out only in the mode of an erotic fiction itself entirely determined by the ideology. But the – of course intra-ideological – critical effect is readable today only because it was *wrought* within a fiction which is simultaneously erotic *and social.* (Whereas a solely erotic determination would never have been able to produce anything except an effect of specular duplication.)

(a) All values in *Morocco* are fetishes: money, jewels, clothes, woman (star). However, it is not just the Sternbergian inscription which produces them as fetishes; they flow directly from fields (social, cultural, psychological – external and anterior to the film) in which they are already constituted as fetishes. Moreover, the reactivation of their fetishist nature by the Sternbergian fiction does not exhaust their value within that inscription – rather it preserves and accentuates it. The Sternbergian fetish, therefore, does not inscribe itself into the fiction *solely* as a signifier of castration[8] – it is not solely involved in the trajectories of the erotic (as their cause).

Note, inversely, how in Lang the inscription is strictly localized at the intersection of all the erotic and topographical trajectories (cf. the diamond in *Moonfleet*, the android of *Metropolis*, etc.).

It follows therefore that in Sternberg, and in *Morocco*, the fetish object or character is not inscribed according to a social-erotic topography as rigorous as that of Lang, even though it is always in the locations of desire (the cabaret and the desert, cf. II. 4) that the fetish functions as the cause of that desire; this is because it also gives rise to inscription effects which are not implied by the narrative logic. (In later films, like *Blonde Venus* or *The Devil is a Woman*, these effects, now purely plastic, managed through a proliferation of veils, feathers, baubles, etc., to parasitize the narrative itself, and in extreme cases, to devour it.)

For example, it will be noted how Amy Jolly denies the jewels offered her by La Bessière their erotic value, so that from there on they denote only Amy Jolly's accession to the bourgeoisie.

(b) Thus in *Morocco*, the fetishes literally function simultaneously as *both* bourgeois value *and* erotic signifiers; they are therefore inscribed both as inalienable values, not capable of being squandered, *and* as signifiers of that squandering.

In Sternberg's films and therefore in *Morocco*, the fetish nature (of the object and the character) is exclusively concerned with what relates to Marlene, her body, her clothes, her make-up, her sophistication, her adornment. For *Morocco* in particular, note:

(i) that the power of seduction and fascination that Marlene exerts (first cabaret scene, where she is literally presented as elusive and untouchable by anyone other than Brown), and the fetishization which it entails, are in proportion to her *inaccessibility*. Freud in his 'On Narcissism'[9] has described 'such women' who 'have the greatest fascination for men, not only for aesthetic reasons, since as a rule they are the most beautiful, but because of certain interesting psychological constellations'. This (inseparable) seduction and refusal are the correlatives of the constitution of a *system of signs*, of *marks*, which are closed, artificial, coherent and self-sufficient;

(ii) note too that this system of signs has to be broken down (i.e. it has to lose its closed nature, its perfection) for the desire aroused by Marlene to cease to come within the order of fetishism and this time to inscribe her into the metonymic *signifying chain* of desire. Quite clearly, for the reasons cited at the beginning of this section, this 'criticism' of fetishism can only be carried out in the last analysis – and this in spite of all mirages, masks, etc. – from a standpoint which is itself fetishist, which does not absolve us from having to describe its mechanism.

Each time therefore that Sternberg wishes to show us Amy Jolly in a non-fetishist erotic situation (the non-fetishism is illusory, as we have just seen), she begins to be 'squandered'; she offers Brown an apple, she gives him her key, she breaks her pearl necklace, she throws off her shoes. The fetishist nature of this 'critique' of fetishism is marked in the fact that Amy Jolly's rejection of her accessories immediately makes them rise retroactively to become fetish-objects in their turn. What results from all this? The impossibility for Sternberg to inscribe into his fiction the idealist statement which seems to be implied by his 'critique of fetishism' (i.e. return to nature, renunciation on the part of the woman of her accessories, her middle-class social status – all that was in the air in the heyday of attempts to capture Sternberg for surrealism, cf. Ado Kyrou[10]). An impossibility which rises from the fact that the moralizing inscription of the renunciation of her accessories (necklace, shoes) is overdetermined by the inevitable inscription of these same accessories as fetish-objects which renew the chain of desire.

It must be noted here that this closed economy in which the formal fetishism and the anti-fetishist ideology constantly refer back to each other is translated by a fetishization of the film locus (conceived as a precious 'little box', a jewel case, etc.) and plastic effects (play of light, masks, veils, etc.) which in the last analysis constitute *the image itself* as mask, gauze, screen – a total effect in which one can distinguish everything that has determined the fetishist appeal of Sternberg's films and to which, either in order to reject it as a 'fancywork' aesthetic, or to valorize it as style, critics have reduced the Sternbergian inscription.

The vicious circle of a reciprocal critique of the ideology of 'natural purity' by fetishism and of fetishism by that ideology thus emerges as strictly interminable within the framework of the bourgeois capitalist system into which Sternberg fits. (From which one can see how great a misunderstanding prevents Hollywood from recognizing Sternberg as one of its own, the myth of the artist *maudit* accrediting him with a fringe position which is no more than a false front.) It is this very impasse which nourishes the fiction of *Morocco*, and most especially the relations of Amy Jolly and Brown which can only be resolved in a flight-pursuit between the two characters: one (Amy Jolly) never able to produce herself except as fetish, the other (Brown) never able to produce himself other than as mirage (the elusive nature of the latter is underscored by two written inscriptions – the first, 'I changed my mind', a trace of his disappearance; the second, Amy Jolly's name engraved on the table in the café, both a trace of his passing through and a signal for the resumption of her pursuit which is by definition endless); as an ideological figure, he has no place in the fetishist field of Amy Jolly, and can only signify by his absence or his flight the impossible elsewhere – the Desert of pleasure [*jouissance*] and of death – where the fetishism of the woman would no longer be valid currency. Hence no doubt the accent this film brings to bear on the demand for love; that is, on an erotic relationship without a price, but of which Dr Lacan has taught us that the love offered is nothing other than the gift of what one does not have.

Translated by Diana Matias

Notes

1 *Cahiers* 223, August-September 1970; translated in *Screen*, vol. 13, no. 3, Autumn 1972, reprinted in Bill Nichols (ed.), *Movies and Methods*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976.

2 This use of the term *énoncé* derives from a distinction made by the French linguist Emile Benveniste, between *énonciation* ('enunciation') and *énoncé*. *Enonciation* is the act whereby an utterance is produced, and *énoncé* means what is thereby uttered in itself. (Translator's note.)

3 Although for want of an adequate English term this has been rendered as 'the One', Kristeva's opposition is not between *l'Un et l'Autre* but between *le Même et l'Autre*, because she is applying her concepts to the text rather than to the individual. For an amplification of her use of this term see Kristeva's *Le Texte du roman* (The Hague, Mouton, 1970), p. 60. (Translator's note.)

4 On the notion of masquerade we refer to Joan Riviere, 'La féminité en tant que mascarade' (*La Psychanalyse*, no. 7) [translated as 'Womanliness as a masquerade' in *Psychoanalysis and Female Sexuality*, edited with an introduction by Dr Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek, Newhaven, Conn., College and University Press Services, 1966] and to Michèle Montrelay, 'Recherches sur la féminité' (*Critique*, no. 278): 'Within this piling up of dotty objects, feathers, hats, strange baroque constructions which rise like so many silent insignia, a dimension of femininity takes shape which Lacan, taking up Joan Riviere's term, designates as *masquerade*. But it must be seen that the end of such a masquerade is to say nothing. Absolutely *nothing*. And in order to produce this nothing a woman uses her own body to disguise herself.' (Authors' note.)

5 A cryptic summing up of the *Cahiers* analysis of Ford's film. For an elaboration, see the translated text. (Translator's note.)

6 The authors are here using 'operator' in its mathematical sense, defined as 'a symbol indicating an operation'; an 'operation' in mathematics being the subjection of a number to a process affecting its value, e.g. multiplication. (Translator's note.)

7 In French, *l'écriture* – literally 'writing', but this is too general to give the sense of the process whereby meaning is inscribed into the text. (Translator's note.)

8 See Freud's text 'Fetishism' [*Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, London, Hogarth Press, 1953–73, vol. 21], and Lacan, 'La Signification du phallus', in *Ecrits* (Paris, Seuil, 1966). (Authors' note.)

9 Freud, *Standard Edition*, vol. 14. (Translator's note.)

10 Ado Kyrou: Greek-born French critic with a special interest in eroticism and cinema.

13 Collective Editorial Statement (*Cahiers du Cinéma, Cinéthique, Tel Quel*): 'Cinema, Literature, Politics'

('Cinéma, littérature, politique', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 226–7, January–February 1971)

Issue no. 122 of *Positif* appears as the most recent symptom, manifested in the right time and place, of an obscurantist campaign directed from certain quarters against any revolutionary theoretical work, a campaign provoked by the increasingly sharp pressure of this work. This enterprise, generally manifested in fantasies of *arbitration* (distribution of 'good' and 'bad' marks, distinction between 'true' and 'false' theoreticians who are moreover easily interchangeable, an attempt to recuperate at the eleventh hour research which until recently has been unknown and/or denigrated), stems from a practice of pure and simple *parasitism* that has as its ultimate goals:

1 To mask or distort the development of theoretical work that draws more and more consciously on Marxism-Leninism;
2 To exploit the delays and difficulties of Marxist-Leninist theory in the area of signifying practices, and more generally in the area of ideology, by recourse to political opportunism (whatever the context) in order to justify all smokescreen activity in this field;
3 To censor that part of Marxism-Leninism which forms its irreducible scientific base: historical materialism *and* dialectical materialism in their radical opposition to idealism in all areas of social practice.

The reaction of *Positif*, among similar manifestations elsewhere, points up the dangers of a cultural politics which, during a time of increased repression (political, judicial, ideological) by the bourgeois state, would permit a reactionary-confusionist discourse such as that emanating from this magazine to find complicity in other discourses ('. . . it would be illusory and politically futile . . . to compare this proselytism[1] with the arguments expounded in *La Nouvelle Critique* . . . or with criticism such as that practised by Albert Cervoni. Each calls for a discussion of an entirely different order'; or again, 'As Jean-Patrick Lebel, who brilliantly analyses this debate in *La Nouvelle Critique*, sensibly observes . . .'), and to turn these discourses against research that attempts to develop from a base of historical and dialectical materialism.

The joint signature of this text by the three journals involved does not in any way aim to deny the contradictions, past and future, that exist between them.[2] It firmly marks the line of demarcation without which bourgeois ideology would reign without a struggle in the specific domains of 'cinema' and 'literature'. The ideological struggle waged by the three journals is determined by the recognition of the antagonistic contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, an antagonism that should serve as the starting-point for considering all the contradictions that mobilize social processes in France today. It is a question of knowing whether or not the revolutionary theory of the proletariat – Marxism-Leninism – will be *disseminated* in the superstructures (that is, in our specific field of work among others, the point of no return marked by the concept of *signifying practice* as opposed to all ideologies of creation and expressiveness).

A correct political position, taken by united democratic forces, could in no circumstances be accompanied by laxity and eclecticism in the ideological struggle at the level of superstructures – a struggle to be waged, in conjunction with all the others, on the bases of Marxist-Leninist theory.

Paris, 21 December 1970

Cahiers du Cinéma, Cinéthique, Tel Quel
For the Editorial staffs: Jean-Louis Comolli, Jean-Paul Fargier, Gérard Leblanc, Jean Narboni, Marcelin Pleynet, Philippe Sollers.

Translated by Alan Williams

Notes

1 The reference here is to *Cahiers du Cinéma*. (Authors' note.)

2 For a general account of the situation of the various French film journals in the post-1968 scene, see Sylvia Harvey, *May '68 and Film Culture*, London, British Film Institute, 1978. ('The immediate cause of this academic row was *Positif*'s publication of an article by Robert Benayoun, 'Les enfants du paradigm', in its December 1970 issue.')

14 Jean-Pierre Oudart: 'The Reality Effect'

('L'effet de réel', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 228, March–April 1971)

The immediate purpose of this analysis of what we shall call the reality effect[1] in Western painting is to help us to understand something which, as present-day spectators of film, we find extremely difficult to grasp: that this effect (what Barthes calls the 'being-there' of things in the cinema), however strong the analogical illusion which – in cinema – continues to cause it to be misread, is the product of *work* which takes place in the system, or rather in the *transformation* of the system of representation in Western painting until its recent subversion. Like any other product, since in the end there is no other way of looking at it, the reality effect cannot be abstracted from a system of figurative production which alone gives it a *value*, or from a process of production upon which its very existence as written product depends. What we eventually have to understand, and what we here begin to consider, is how the *subject* is inscribed in such a process. Not the subject of the statement [*énoncé*], for whom the product constitutes a meaning effect (as it does for the spectator, in the case of pictorial representation), but the *signifier* whose unrecognized inscription in the structure of the discourse determines the *production effect*. It could be said that in the system of representation which characterizes Western painting, as in its continuation in the cinema, the following are simultaneously overlooked:

1 the figurative structure (which we shall call the reality effect [*effet de réalité*]) as the product of specific pictorial codes;
2 representation as that which establishes the figurative system as *fiction* by including the spectator (the effect of the real [*effet de réel*]), as something determined in its spatial structure, in all its variations and transformations, as well as in the least of its figurative effects, by the inscription, or rather the re-marking, of the subject in the figurative systems which date back to the Quattrocento. Effect of the real and reality effect always moreover occur together in pictorial representation from the Renaissance to the

nineteenth century, endowing it with a status it had never possessed before: they give figures a referent in reality, and imply an *assumption of existence* whose ideological determination weighs more heavily than ever on present-day cinema. We shall therefore examine the process whereby they are produced, focusing on the main historical turning-points.

First, a brief chronological reminder: it was in the Quattrocento that the spatial codes used in pictorial representation were standardized, on the model of Vitruvius' stage sets.[2] The same period also saw the codification, especially in Italian and Dutch painting, of the representation of reflections (eyes, water, fabrics, etc.) and shadows.

The structural relation between these two products is highlighted by contemporary references, in the first case to optical speculation and experimentation (the eye as the centre of the world in the work of Leonardo da Vinci, the invention of monocular perspective) and in the second case to the idea of all the objects being lit from a single source (a procedure systematized in the still-lifes of Dutch glass). There is also the example of works like *The Moneychanger and his Wife* by Quentin Metsys (Louvre) in which, in front of the couple seen from the front and the side, there is a mirror whose reflection shows the source of light (a window) and a person, thus included in an imaginary space which also includes the place of the spectator; and especially Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, analysed by Michel Foucault in *Les mots et les choses*,[3] in which the figures are quite explicitly standing opposite two people excluded from the representation and similarly situated, in the imaginary place of the spectator, through the inscription of their reflections which can be seen in the mirror in the middle of the picture, at the back of the room.

So, during the Renaissance, in a system of pictorial representation which pre-dated the theatrical emphasis of the Quattrocento and in which the idea of the spectator in his space was already latent, the inscription of the spectator in the space of the representation is made explicit first of all through the doubling of the scene portrayed. In the Velázquez painting the figures are addressing other absent, imaginary figures who appear in the representation in the form of a lure, the reflected image of the king and queen. This lure gives the scene a new dimension, that of the *real*: as it re-stages the arrangement of the representation, it turns it into a spectacle seen by a spectator *excluded* from its field, the reflection being the term through which the spectator is himself reinscribed as *subject*, the index of his existence. And so, from this period on, an *assumption of existence*, implied by the new subjective structure of pictorial representation, is made about the people who figure in paintings. Such an assumption will determine pictorial ideology and practice until the end of the nineteenth century.

The multiplication of reality effects consisting essentially in effects of shadow, reflection and spatial discontinuity which, initially, have nothing to do with the objective experience of sight (always provided that this reference is not purely ideological), but constitute, in the field of representation, a generalized inscription of the lure (for instance through a play of light, as with the mirror in Velázquez's painting, or light and shade in landscapes by Le Lorrain), make representation into an index of something else. The overlapping arrangement characteristic of Poussin's paintings, where every figurative element hides another, also constitutes the trace of this inscription of the subject in the system of representation adopted by European painting. But whereas in Velázquez's arrangement of the scene the position of the subject is marked only as being that of a privileged spectator, in the Romantic landscape for example this position is infinitely displaced towards something else, towards another place indicated by all the figurative elements, a place thus excluded, and at the same time included, in the representation. Hence the need for a phantasmic reading of these pictures inasmuch as their figurative elements interconnect through a perpetual displacement (so obvious in the composition of Poussin's paintings) of the position assigned to the spectator by the original frontal scene. That the spectator is involved phantasmically in the representation is paradoxical in that he is first installed in a privileged position, but then placed simultaneously, through the spatial structure of its composition, in a position of *misrecognition* [*méconnaissance*]: if he is in a position to see well, if he is the one to whom the spectacle is addressed, either implicitly or explicitly, as in *Las Meninas*, that is because the representation presents him with a game of hide and seek which *defines* him as privileged spectator. And, in the exercise of reading the painting, this position is only tenable if the lack on which it is based is constantly reactivated through its generalized inscription in the representation.

And so the spectator, excluded from the representation, is involved in it in a phantasmic way: he is now inscribed as a subject by a compositional arrangement which will proceed to mask its theatrical origins ever more effectively, in a figurative system which will present its effects of the real as effects of optical reality (reflections, light and shade, discontinuity of planes, etc.) which are the traces of the inscription of the subject in the form of a lack.

What is completely hidden by the corresponding ideology is the fact that these reality effects, which by the nineteenth century were to become the major statement of a figurative discourse established in the Renaissance, are engendered by the inscription of the subject in the representation, and constitute the effects of its transformation. In other words, realist ideology masks the *symbolic* articulation of this new discourse, the lack on which its structure is based, and the inscription of the subject in the form of this lack. The reality effect, in Western painting from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, is not determined by the representation of elements reproduced by 'analogy' with optical reality, or rather, these elements (whose ideological representation as 'analogical' elements only happens after the event) entered the system of representation through a process of misrecognition, not only as 'analogical' representatives of reality, but as *signifiers* in the Lacanian sense, marks of the inscription of the subject in figurative discourse. And it is only because they have constituted the signifiers of this inscription of the subject in this discourse that they have had a decisive role to play and produced an overall reality effect.[4]

The assumption of existence made about human figures in the representation, and about the representation as a whole, was determined by this inscription of the subject, obvious during the Renaissance but repressed in the nineteenth century. It is because there is something lacking in the representation and because the representation is structured by this lack that such an assumption can be made about the figures who are all signifiers of this lack (acting as masks for each other, as in a landscape), an assumption which, by making the spectator the subject of a statement similar to an *assertive* statement in literature, produces these figures as the signs of a discourse addressed to him. Or in other words, the *punctuation* of this figurative discourse (the ordering of levels, the position of the elements on which it is based) corresponds to that of first-person assertive narrative, where the effect of presence is also determined by repetition, by an appeal to meaning (through reiteration of the pronoun 'I', but also through a number of rhetorical devices: 'It was then that . . .', 'Seeing this . . .'). The effect of presence in assertive narrative, like the reality effect in pictorial representation, functions only through being *repeated*, and is also a *metonymy* whose only function is to keep the discourse going. In either case, the attribution of a real referent to the figures in the representation, or the narrative's subsuming of a real event, is a function of the subject's exclusion from the representation and his inscription in the discourse of the representation or the narrative. If the sign, like the figure, makes things present, that is because the signifying chain implies a subject who, by virtue of his metonymic inscription in the chain, makes the meaning effect (the narrative, the figurative representation) as it were the predicate of a subject (in this case the subject of the enunciation, produced as an *effect* of the discursive structure) *able to open and close the statement only because, as a signifier, he is already inscribed metonymically in the entire chain.*[5] The *subject of the statement* is thus constituted by the inscription of a signifier in the chain, and the statement itself is founded on an assertion formed out of the failure to recognize this inscription. In this kind of painting, as in this kind of narrative system, such an inscription leaves no *readable* traces: the discourse is readable only for a hallucinating subject who, as he is already inscribed in the chain, takes the traces literally, confusing the figures and signs (which are also *his* signifiers) with the things themselves.[6]

It should be emphasized that *reality effects are structured metonymically.* Let us also note that the transformation which the inscription of the subject produces not only in the general structure of representation, but in the whole iconic discourse which this implies, can be related to the transformation of linguistic discourse and its ideology: corresponding to the institution of the sign, the one-to-one correspondence of a signifier and a signified, is that of the *analogon,* i.e. the one-to-one correspondence of a figure to a referent in the ideology of representation.

The assumption of existence which can be made on the level of linguistic discourse as well as on that of pictorial representation corresponds to what Lacan calls *'the establishment of a real which comes to hide the truth'.*

The *truth* is that this new discourse owes its existence to the inscription of the subject in its chain and that thereafter its new structure implies a fundamental lack for which, as far as painting is concerned, each reality effect (that is, in the nineteenth century, in Corot especially, each figurative trace) constitutes the cut, sutured by the reality effect [*effet de réalité*] produced by the codification of all effects of the real [*effets de réel*]. The success of the suturing operation should be thought of both in terms of pictorial codes (from the Renaissance on, all pictorial effects are strictly codified) and of figurative registers: the field of representation will henceforth include only *real objects,* i.e. objects *which can be recognized* in reality and whose likeness is inscribed in the picture. But once again, the success of the reality effect owes far more to the repeated inscription of these key signifiers of figurative discourse than to the analogical faithfulness of their representation.

The development of predominantly 'bourgeois' forms of representation (domestic interiors, still-lifes, portraits, landscapes) accompanying the disappearance of religious and allegorical subjects during the Renaissance can only be explained in terms of a more general transformation of Renaissance discourse. A coherent theory of the figurative systems of the period would need to be included in a broader theory of its fetishistic values: its fetishizing of representation, as of money or the sign, has to do with the inscription of the subject as signifier, in the form of a lack. The trace of this inscription or, to be more specific, its *production effect,* consists in the reality effect in painting, the emphasis on surplus value in the discourse of early capitalist ideology,[7] and the assertive effect in linguistic discourse.

Here we shall distinguish between *production effect* and *meaning effect.*

The production effect consists in a purely metonymic emphasis on the discursive structure which, although it is misrecognized, is nothing other than the relation between those elements whose structuring has left traces (the effect of the real). Meaning effects, given the overdetermination of the discourse, can be of many kinds. Until the nineteenth century, even in the work of a painter like Goya (where the reality effect is put into question in terms of a traditional figurative system by the substitution of figures with an imaginary referent for figures with a real referent – a substitution made plausible by faithfulness to effects of the real), the production effect is not so very different from what it was during the Renaissance, given the ideological resistance of the figurative system, that is to say the persistence of realist figurative values. For the production effect to make way for a new inscription, the dominant meaning effects of the old inscription must cease to be dominant, in other words they must have been replaced by others. Only then, *after the event,* does a new inscription become possible, does this pre-text make it thinkable. In the case of painting, literary theories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries played a decisive role in the transformation of representation, in the same way that the theatre was, and still is, a crucial reference point for the cinema. In any system of writing, the only *referent* is another system, and an inscription has to have succeeded in one system for a new inscription to become possible in another, given that every reinscription consists in the reworking, by means of other codes, of a discourse already constituted in its major meaning effects.

And so, until the end of the nineteenth century, painting was constantly (at least in the work of those we call great painters, on the basis of criteria we need to question, moreover) on the edge of a disjunction between its effects of the real (its production effect) and its effects of reality (its dominant meaning effect). This disjunction was implied by the structure of its iconic discourse: indeed, if scriptural *mastery* is achieved in this figurative system by a reality effect produced by the repetition of effects of the real, and if this overall effect makes the production of effects of the real impossible to recognize, then *the system, by virtue of its scriptural principle, i.e. the production effect which its practice engenders, is led to produce its own reinscription*. This reinscription is produced at the very point where the production effect, the metonymic repetition itself, is inscribed in the representation. It is noticeable that, from the eighteenth century onwards, if painting is not presenting itself, in line with naturalist ideology, as a metaphor of reality, i.e. a coded representation, it tends systematically to emphasize the metonymic effects whose interconnection establishes its overall reality effect. And it is as a result of this emphasis, this reinscription and the work it involves, that the *pictorial object* – the materiality of the picture as something made up of relations of the chromatic and the plastic, of colour and texture, which produce the figurative effect through the play of their differences – *will gain prominence,* to the point of compromising the reality effect whose signifiers it constitutes. In the work of still-life painters like Chardin, as in that of landscape painters like Corot (and no doubt because the genre in which they work is the one which puts up least resistance to the naturalist figurative illusion – unlike the portrait), *partitioning effects* are produced very systematically, that is to say, the picture reinscribes the metonymic links between its figure-producing elements. It was this reinscription which probably led to the subversion of naturalist representation which, once again, depended essentially on these effects. The most powerful naturalist effects were moreover produced, not coincidentally, by Corot, in his most highly 'codified' sketches (that of the *Pont de Narni,* for example), where every brush stroke, every paint effect, bears a very discreet relation to its neighbours, while at the same time constituting the pictorial transcription, the most hallucinatory metaphor ever produced of an actually observed effect. In Corot's work, the reality effect (in the *Pont de Narni,* the water, the shadow of the bridge, the touches of light on the ruins, the background, etc.) exposes the system of purely pictorial differences which produced it (the highly elaborate scale of greens, for instance, and the way it is used in the paintings, is not at all realistic), while at the same time hiding itself as metaphor through the naturalist illusion it produces, although there is absolutely nothing analogical about its relation to the real referent – it represents, on the contrary, a choice of everything that *stands out* for the eye (and not any eye) in the real spectacle. In this painter, the reality effect thus involves a double emphasis, invisible because it is so captivating, on both the system of colour differences which make up its code and the effects of contrast which, in a real spectacle, already produce this effect for an eye made aware of such contrasts by painting. Hence the hyper-natural and yet completely codified *punctuation* of leaves and grass which endow the contrasts with all the sheen of the realist illusion.

Seen in terms of the *logic* of its development, Cubist painting involves a further reinscription, which works in two directions:

1 on the one hand, a hypostasis of the reality effect produced by the dissociation of planes, taking the form, in the first Cubist pictures, of a purely metonymic linking of alternately light and dark planes which divide up the whole surface of the picture, throwing into relief an identical series of imaginary volumes;
2 on the other hand, thanks especially to the technique of collage, an emphasis on the metaphorical effect invisible in naturalist representation, i.e. the figurative effect produced not, as a retrospective illusion might have us believe, by the substitution of the artistic product for the real object (the *analogon* assuming, for this purely ideological viewpoint, the exact place of the real referent), but by the substitution in the figurative discourse of one element for another (or the covering up of one element by another), the other element being produced by the effect of another code, or being qualitatively very different from the first (Watteau's figures, for instance, are different from his backgrounds, and Delacroix remarked of the painted landscape in *Atelier de Courbet* that this figurative element was different from the rest of the picture, that the sky resembled a real sky). The technique of collage no doubt represents an extreme limit in the scriptural process of European painting: it highlights the representational structure in a series of discrete elements, while at the same time making more obvious than ever before the extent to which the metaphorical effect which springs from the formal linking of figurative elements, as well as from their material difference, owes its success less to the analogy between the figurative elements and their real referents than to their prominence in the imaginary space of the picture, *as if the effect of the real [effet de réel] thus produced was engendering the reality effect [effet de réalité] itself.* Once again, the ideology and practice of realist painting has been determined by a generalized inscription of reality effects whose referents, *for ideological reasons,* could only be things really seen. Reality effects persist, moreover, far beyond so-called analogical representation, in cubism and surrealist

painting, and also in another direction which emphasizes the underlying substance of the pictorial object itself, now no longer envisaged as the material basis of a particular representation – as the means of producing reality effects within a codified figurative system – but as a piece of the real in its natural state, so to speak, inscribed and framed as such, as an aesthetic object whose only value is to be a pure illusion: its interest, for the spectator, resides in the total insignificance of its subject matter, or rather in its disconcerting effect, inasmuch as the representation is indistinguishable from its material basis, and inasmuch as its insignificance, through the reinscription which the frame brings about, reduces this material presence to a pure signifier effect, an appeal to meaning to which nothing in the representation responds except its lack of meaning. The fetishism of the pictorial object thus appears as the substitution of a lack in the representation (the reality effect which is always logically inscribed as a metonymy) for a representation which consists, on the semantic level, of a pure effect of lack, *satisfied* as well as emphasized by a metaphorical effect which is somehow suspended: the pictorial object (paint, canvas, or any other materials) may always be read as the representation of something else (the earth, a wall, whatever you like), but this is no longer a genuine reading: it is not based on any actual inscription, it does not really decipher anything. It is in this simulacrum of the reading process that the all-powerfulness of the reality effect, here reduced to a pure illusion, is once again revealed. In this particular case, the inscription gives rise, in its impossible reading, to the metaphorical substitution of an imaginary referent for a real figure, a substitution whose only metaphorical meaning effect is this infinite and phantasmic succession of representations of the same thing, endlessly substitutable for itself, but whose deciphering can produce a meaning effect only in so far as the representation no longer depends on the figures deployed. The cinema is able, far more easily than painting, to reinscribe the metaphorical effect which is produced *automatically* by its figurative base – the continuum of light – by the deletion and substitution of figures within the same shot (for instance, in the scene in the train in Bertolucci's *The Conformist*). The reality effect, the lure, consists in this extreme case in the very suspension of the metaphorical effect, in its propensity to disappear.

In the case of so-called informal painting, the reality effect is produced by abandoning any reference to a code, which gives rise, in the process of its reading (but also just as much in its practice), to that cascade of metaphorical substitutions of objects which stand for the pictorial object through the simple metonymic repetition of the signifier effect created by the inscription of the subject and by the fact that the latter is no longer adequately accounted for by the metaphor of the spectacle, *the abandoning of the representational structure having resulted in the disappearance of the subject of the statement, but the structure of the enunciation having remained intact.* It can therefore be said, in this extreme case, that if the representation cannot be named, this is not (or not only) because no reference point can be found but because the spectator, in his reading, cannot name himself as such. One of the constant effects of surrealist painting consists, on the contrary, in producing reality effects [*effets de réalité*] which are the result of successful effects of the real [*effets de réel*] and nothing else, and in thus offering the wholly familiar spectacle of an imaginary made concrete (the window in paintings by Magritte, the re-framing of paintings by Max Ernst), in which the recognition effect does not relate to the figurative element as reproducing a real referent, but to the subject as spectator.

In both of these divergent developments from the representational system of the Renaissance, which critics have sometimes opposed in a purely ideological way, calling one of them 'materialist' and the other 'idealist', it can be noted that the production effect is cancelled out:

1 In the first case, the painter abandons the representational structure, but the fetishistic reality effect persists because of the very fact that the representational structure is abandoned and every meaning effect produced by a code is refused.
2 In the second case, the figurative system employed preserves the representational structure, but only so as to ensure, as if through some kind of precipitate, the success of the metaphorical operations which occur within its field, and which could not occur if the figurative elements inscribed in this field did not produce the appearance of a reality effect.

This distinction applies in its entirety to the cinema:

1 The first case corresponds to that of present-day film-makers who reject the scenic structure of representation, who moreover almost always fetishize the filmic object, and claim to build their discourse from the very concreteness of the images (i.e. of the images as negatives, which makes them already metaphorical since a film image, in its concreteness, is not the same as a negative), not realizing that their discourse is in fact made up of metaphorical signifieds automatically produced by the reading of the images. Their scriptural practice does no more than accentuate, in their films' discourse, meaning effects already produced: there is no genuine reinscription of the signifiers, except for their key signifiers. And so there is no re-marking of the discursive structure which they take as the pretext of their inscription; this structure continues, on the contrary, to produce effects of which they are unaware. *There has never been so much fetishizing of effects in the cinema as since the abandonment of its original scenic structure.*
2 Inversely, this structure, used by film-makers like the Taviani brothers, Godard and Glauber Rocha in the interests of readability and nothing more, or so it would appear, allows them to exploit the reality effects that it automatically creates to produce a discourse free from the fetishistic effect of the representational system: reality effects are not inscribed in the structure, and the fetishistic effect of the latter is to be found not on the level of individual images, but *in its articulation with the fiction of classical cinema*, thanks to the mechanism of 'suture' which constantly reinscribes

the reality effect as a means of fetishizing the effects of presence automatically obtained when the film is projected.

If the inscription of reality effects amounts to a qualitative jump in the history of representation in Western painting, even if, until the end of the nineteenth century, its own visible effect would appear to be a surplus of reality in painting (whereas with the Impressionists, there is less and less of it in the end, or even none at all as in Monet's last paintings, whose titles 'Impressions' or 'Effects' are a good indication, even for the painter himself, of the fact that the ideology of analogical representation has been abolished), this is because the inscription of such effects is the result of a re-marking of the subject in the representation, a re-marking which is itself the cause of the work of subversion which, from the Renaissance to the twentieth century, has undermined the representational structure of the Quattrocento. This ought to allow us, here at least, to define the process of scriptural production, and to pinpoint the effect of the inscription of the subject. This effect, which is purely an effect of the signifier, consists, in painting, of a metonymic doubling of the representational scene and, as a logical extension of this, the establishment of a series of networks whose structure is also purely metonymic (the relation between the different parts in Poussin's landscapes, the stipple effect in Vermeer's paintings). The production of these structures will go unnoticed for as long as their effects (reality effects) have not been reinscribed somewhere other than in the figurative system of the landscape, the genre painting or the still-life; that is, for as long as they occur within a realist representation. In Cézanne, where the inscription of the reality effect (what he calls his '*petite sensation*') ends up by almost completely abolishing any realist reference, and then in Cubist paintings, these structures emerge in their own right, in the pure play of identical volumes.

The metonymic doubling of the scenic structure in painting, from the Renaissance on, is however only one of several means whereby reality effects can be inscribed. Or rather, this inscription was *perverted*, at the end of the nineteenth century, in the work of the Impressionists and especially that of their immediate successors. In Odilon Redon, Gauguin or Van Gogh, or indeed in Renoir, the eye, the luminous focal point, the sun, the flesh whose reflection stands out in the picture, are the main elements in a figurative system which was to culminate in Masson's drawings and paintings, a metonymic intermingling of eyes, mouths, sex organs, patches of colour, flames.

If for a long time, therefore, the inscription of reality effects in painting seemed to be nothing more than an emphasis, in the picture, on effects observable in reality (Cézanne would *look at* his landscapes), the accentuation of this inscription in modern painting appears as the main reason for the subversion of naturalist representation. We observe that this work of subversion, that is, the historical succession of figurative systems each of which led to the next, depends in every case on a lack in the representation which, for the painter himself, is the blind spot which he wishes to inscribe, the very cause of his work being his interest in this inscription, whatever his governing ideology, whether it is a question for Poussin of reconstructing his landscape scenes, for the Impressionists of transcribing the effect of light, or for Redon of conveying a dream figure in images. The insistent action of this blind spot must be seen as corresponding to that of the symbolic in the imaginary: the blind spot, the point on which the painter is working and which will result in the more or less radical transformation of the figurative system, consists without his knowing it in a *self*-inscription, whether this inscription occurs in what one might term an obsessional mode through the indefinite displacement of the spectator in modern landscapes or, later on, in a perverse mode, through the metaphorical substitution of new images for this representation made up of absence, i.e. the replacement of what, in the representation, indicated a lack by figurative elements which sometimes, moreover, only succeed in reversing this relation to lack. Thus, in Gauguin, the metaphor of the luminous focal point takes over from the traditional effect of light and shade, in an admirable reversal whereby a shadow which *produces* light is substituted for a shadow which is *the result of* light; and in Renoir, the erogenous zones of his bathers stand out at the very point where the play of light disposes its luring effects. In either case, it is at the point where something is lacking in the representation (since their use of figures is still very faithful to the classical system of representation), that is, at the point where the representation draws attention to itself as a presence made up of absence (sunlight on objects), that the work which will transform the figurative structure takes place. Here and there, the pictorial product consists of a metaphor which is a substitute for a cut in the signifying chain – the trace, in the representation, of a subject who can logically be inscribed only as an effect of lack.

And so, if the reality effect is the product of the reinscription of the subject in the representational system of Western painting, beginning with a redefinition of the position of the subject in the representation, and giving rise to a figurative tradition which is still going strong in the cinema, it has to be recognized today as an extremely particular and transitory mode of the inscription of the subject in a historically determined figurative system. And if today the reality effect persists when this kind of figurative system has disappeared, it does so more often than not as a stereotyped trace, repetitive and unproductive inasmuch as its inscription only reproduces either a pure effect of illusion, henceforth recognized as such (for example with Optical Art), or, at the opposite pole (with so-called informal painting which, however different, is none the less also the hypostasis of a logically similar effect) spatial discontinuities and an insignificance of subject matter which is equally disorienting on account of a similar blindness to the signifier effect. If there is work going on today in the area of painting, it is to be found elsewhere.[8]

It can thus be said that the work which led to the subversion of naturalist representation through the effective reinscription of its latent fetishism has continued to suffer from the effects of the latter. But as we have been saying, it is possible in the case of painting and film to conceive of a reinscription of the reality effect elsewhere than in a system which fetishized this effect, since within the particular framework of its signifying economy, of its value system, it constituted the mark of a misrecognized inscription of the subject. In surrealist painting which does not discard the scenic structure, the reality effect persists beyond its fetishistic inscription. It becomes a means of articulating the figurative elements independently of an ideologically 'analogical' system of representation which inscribed it as a fetishistic effect. Similarly in Straub's *Othon*,[9] for example, the passage from one shot to the next articulates a cinematographic discourse produced independently of the signifying economy and figurative value system within which it was also produced as a fetishistic effect. The problem of the inscription of the reality effect in the cinema (which, along with that of the inscription of the filmic object, we propose to consider next) is the following: if the shooting and projection of a film automatically and simultaneously create a reality effect [*effet de réalité*] (which lends itself especially to being recognized as 'analogical') and an effect of the real [*effet de réel*], and if this double effect has never, until the cinema of today, been conceived as the product of scriptural work (already produced), what have been the effects, in the inscription of the cinematic discourse, of the misrecognized representational structure which is being reproduced in the cinema? What misrecognized action has this representational structure had on the economy of the discourse? And how (and to what extent) has this system been deconstructed by the work of film-makers? What structural transformations are involved? This is what we shall be looking at with reference to the inscription of figures (of figure-subjects, one might say) in the classical cinema and in the latest film by Jean-Marie Straub.

Translated by Annwyl Williams

Notes

1 Oudart's essay distinguishes between *effet de réalité* or meaning effect ('figurative structures as the produce of specific pictorial codes') and *effet de réel* or production effect ('representation as that which establishes the fictional element by including the spectator'). Such a distinction being impossible in English, I have translated both terms by 'reality effect', except where a point hinges on the distinction, when I have reproduced the French. (Translator's note.)

2 Cf. Jean-Louis Schefer, *Scénographie d'un tableau* (Paris, Seuil, 1969). (Author's note.)

3 Translated as *The Order of Things*, New York, Pantheon, 1970. For a statement of the context and main lines of argument in Oudart that link the analysis of *Las Meninas* to the suture, see Daniel Dayan, 'The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema', in Bill Nichols (ed.), *Movies and Methods* (1), Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976.

4 In the landscape tradition of the Far East, on the contrary, reality effects are separate from a flat-surface representation which excludes effects of light and shade. They consist almost entirely in effects of perspective whose coding does not refer to a monocular system. (Author's note.)

5 For the representational system of the Quattrocento to have been possible, it is obvious that the subject (let us say the seeing subject) had already to be inscribed in the iconographic system of Christian painting dating back to the early Middle Ages. The new representational system involved the transformation of this inscription (cf. Giotto's reorganization of figurative discourse into truly dramatic sequences, relating directly to contemporary transformations in religious ideology). (Author's note.)

6 The historical advent of the subject of the representation (the spectator) or, if you prefer, of a figurative discourse which functions as the predicate of a subject identified with the spectator, corresponds to the advent of the 'subject of science' (cf. Lacan) and the logocentric subject and would need to be studied in the framework of a general theory of *discourse*, in the sense in which Lacan uses the term, when he defines a discourse by the 'position of its elements from the viewpoint of a structure' – a structure such as those produced in the course of his seminar for 1969–70 (see *Scilicet*, 2–3).

The figurative structure of European painting, looked at from the viewpoint of its terminology and taking its transformations into account, appears to lie somewhere between the discourse of the Master and that of the hysteric: the production effect (to which the object 'a' of these discursive structures would theoretically correspond) is first repressed in the representation and then progressively valorized as a fetish. (Author's note.)

7 See in this connection Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Surplus value, in early capitalist discourse, before its repression in established capitalist discourse, functions as the signifier which allows the bourgeois subject to be re-marked (in every sense of the term) before seizing power. (Author's note.)

8 We shall examine at a later date, as part of an attempt to explain the aesthetics of modern reading (and pleasure), which implies but does not bring about a theoretical practice, the progressive emphasis and hypostasis of the production effect in modern painting and in the cinema. The transformation and reception of their writing clearly poses the problem of how this emphasis comes about. Why is the reality effect valued so highly, to the point that a painting which did not incorporate it would be automatically excluded from the art market? As far as the cinema is concerned, MacMahonist aesthetics and criticism have emphasized this effect. These phenomena would be unthinkable outside the framework of a general theory of the fetishization of values which would establish a link between the production of bourgeois values and the particular inscription of the subject in the discourse of the bourgeoisie. The problem is to work out the connection between the progressive valorization of the reality effect (the production effect of bourgeois representation), the increasingly marginal position of the artist in bourgeois society, and the current fetishization of both. (Author's note.)

'MacMahonist aesthetics and criticism' is a reference to the 'MacMahonist tendency', so called after the Paris cinema in the rue MacMahon which specialized in showing popular (mainly American) cinema in the adventure and melodrama genres. Critics such as Michel Mourlet (see Volume 2) were particularly associated with the tendency. For a statement of the MacMahonist position see Jacques Seguine, 'Education du spectateur, ou L'Ecole du MacMahon', *Cahiers* 111, September 1960.

9 For *Othon* see Ch. 10 in this volume.

15 Jean-Pierre Oudart: 'Notes for a Theory of Representation'

('Notes pour une théorie de la représentation', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 229 and 230, May–June and July 1971)

I Reminders and propositions

If we are going to deconstruct the system of representation – by which we mean, in short, a figurative system referring to a real object contemporaneous with the producer of the representation and seen by him, inscribing its figures as 'being there', watched by the spectator and watching him, in the case of human figures, through the meaning of a scenic structure which, as we have already indicated, underwent a process of transformation between the Quattrocento and the end of the nineteenth century – it is necessary that this system be situated within the historical framework of its production. If this is not done, there is a considerable risk that a confusion which weighs heavily on present-day film theory will continue to arise with regard to figurative systems that are very different but have in common the fact that they all involve a scenic structure (and one that does not always refer to the theatre) which produces, though perhaps only *for a present-day spectator*, what we have called a reality effect; that is, which establishes the figures in question, whatever the real or imaginary object to which they refer as 'being there' for a spectator himself installed as *metteur en scène* of a fantasy based on these figures as objects. This present-day *interpellation*,[1] through such figurative means, of the subject as *metteur en scène*, this establishment of an imaginary as real, is to be explained, we would emphasize, by the persistence of the ideological effects of the representational system, something that the cinema has reactivated, whose ultimate lure effect has been to create a bracketing together of figurative systems which, once again, are differently determined socially, historically and ideologically.

Deconstructing the operations whereby the reality effect is produced, replacing them in the different figurative systems in which they have been inscribed, will perhaps allow us to understand why the reality effect, whether detested or fetishized, constitutes the blind spot in the discourse of present-day film theory – but we will first need to specify the relations between the inscription of this effect and the ways in which the spectator is interpellated by film or painting. In our previous article, we proposed a theoretical distinction between *production effect* and *meaning effect*, and defined the reality effect as an effect of the inscription of pictorial figures in a scenic structure; in other words, as *the production effect of a scenic representational system*. This production effect of successive representational systems between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century is what determined *the conditions of their legibility as discourses*. It was in fact reinscribed, in a repetitive and relatively fixed manner, as the *unseen* element of these successive systems: even as it conditioned a visibility which was itself a function of the ideological and social determination of the representation, its own ideological and social determination remained unconscious. However, what allows us to speak of a break between representation as we have described it and the other systems is that this form of representation involves not only the development of a figurative system with real and contemporary referents, privileged by the bourgeoisie in relation to all preceding or contemporary systems (religious or mythological systems, for instance), but also the (ideologically and socially overdetermined) transformation of the scenic structure of preceding systems; a transformation effected as *a repression of the scenic structure of the representation*. The representational system does not consist in the addition of a spectator to a pre-existing scene. Or, to be more precise, although from a religious discourse like Giotto's to a secular painting like *Las Meninas* by Velázquez the scene has apparently stayed the same, the actors and spectators have changed. Different actors now interpellate different spectators. And it is in this transformation, invisible yet weighed down with ideological and social implications, it is in the substitution of real characters – the painter's contemporaries – for religious figures, that the properly phantasmatic structure of the representational scene was produced and has to be located. While apparently resorting to the same reality effects as medieval painters and producing his figures as real, Velázquez inscribes the trace of their real vision, inscribes his figures as people really seen in an iconic fiction which implies the spectator to whom these figures are addressed, thereby producing an *assertion effect* which will persist until the end of the nineteenth century. This assertive structure of the painter's discourse was therefore produced through a reinscription of the scenic structure of medieval religious painting and its discursive syntax (for example, the way in which Giotto's 'scenes' are related by the look). But from now on, the figures represent the painter's contemporaries, implied like him in *social relations* which, in *Las Meninas*, are directly written into the scene, thereby perhaps providing the key to the transformation which the advent of representation brought about in the scenic structure of painting: the figures bow before a master whose authority they acknowledge and who occupies, in the new scenic structure and in the representational fantasy, *the very place of the real painter at work, in front of his canvas*.

The painting's social discourse, the king taking the place of the painter, Velázquez playing the fantasy role of king, provides an exact description of the status which will henceforth be accorded to representation, as *a semblance of reality produced by the repression of any discourse on the social relations of production in which this figurative production was inscribed. The characteristic of bourgeois representation will be to produce its figures as real for a subject assumed to know nothing of the production relations in which the pictorial product will, like all other products, be inscribed.* This operation will consist in the *repression of the production effect*, of the *metonymic* trace of the figure's inscription in a scenic structure, through the *metaphor* of the spectacle (in Velázquez's painting: the reflection-the eye-the eye of the king, the painter and spectator).[2] The production of this metaphor, whose ideological and social determinations we shall examine in more detail at the conclusion of this text, will itself determine the practice, which became the rule after the Renaissance, of conjuring away the scenic structure of figurative systems.

II On ideology

(a) That the advent of representation, i.e. of a figurative system which refers exclusively to real objects and the painter's contemporaries, should imply a transformation in the status both of the producer of the representation and of his product, of the painter and the painting, ought to be theorizable within the general framework of a study of the transformation of medieval society and of the rise of the bourgeoisie and its ideology. We shall merely indicate, in these notes, the key concepts which strike us as necessary for such a study, beginning with the distinction between *symbol* and *sign*,[3] already proposed by Julia Kristeva – concepts which we shall endeavour not to abstract from their economic and ideological determinations. We shall say that the symbol is in the first instance *the object which regulates the practice of religious sacrifice*, and the sign *the object which regulates the exchange of economic products*.

The *symbol* is implied in medieval social practices by the *debt* which governs the hierarchical relations betwen social groups; the *sign* is implied in the social relations at the heart of medieval society by the trading activities of the bourgeoisie.

(b) The debt which binds the peasantry to the landlords constitutes the main sociological reference of the symbol, just as the debt which binds the theological subject to the creator constitutes its religious reference. The structure of medieval society is inscribed and conceived on the pattern of this theological relationship: the created is indebted to the creator and the creator to the created, indicating the reversibility of the conception of the divine filiation of the subject – the debt to the Father reinscribes the Father's debt, and the theme of the Son's sacrifice as the symbol of the Father's debt to his creatures was already implied by the conception of the Father as cause of the symbolic advent of the subject. The theme of the Father in debt to his creatures is the effect of the Father's inscription (the signifier Father) as only guarantor of the subject's identity, just as the social institution of economic debt (which parallels that of religious sacrifice) inscribes the subordination of the subject to its law, and overdetermines social relations of production which will subsequently be *obliterated* by the bourgeoisie. The important thing is to locate, in the production and successive transformations of bourgeois discourse before and after the seizure of power by the bourgeoisie, *the political and economic operation which consists in repressing the medieval institution of debt.*

(c) The development of bourgeois discourse implies the production of a *subjective position* which can only be understood historically by the *exclusion* of the bourgeoisie from the medieval social structure, and by the fact that before it came to power (that is, before its political ideology was established) it had already, by virtue of its trading activities, set its discourse in motion: *it had brought together its signifiers* by valorizing the money equivalents of goods (*signs*, in Lacan's sense of the term, implying moreover that a theory of the sign would need to be part of a more general theory of representation). Before the bourgeoisie assumed political power, these signs are inscribed in a first (theological/monetary) version of its ideology, signifying its exclusion as a social class from medieval society in decline, in a mode that might be termed *hysterical* since what emerges directly is the *effect of a symbolic cut* (in the Lacan sense), *the signifier of a surplus value which designates the capitalist as the solitary elect of God, excluded from a society of which he is not yet the master.* It could be said that in the transformation of bourgeois discourse, hysteria gave way to mastery when the political status of the bourgeoisie was firmly established; for instance, in the discourse of the French Revolution, the Declaration of the Rights of Man ('All men are free and equal before the law') signifying, within the framework of this *levelling* ideological discourse, nothing other than the abolition of the medieval institution of debt and the establishment of *an equivalence between men in general* which will immediately make the new ruling class unable to recognize *the singularity of its position.* Hence that *universal vocation* of the bourgeoisie which surprised Marx, and which could be interpreted as a deleting of the symbolic inscription of the subject, making it impossible for the individual to conceive of himself as a particular kind of subject, or to understand the symbolic differences between groups.

(d) It could be said that the discourse of the *capitalist* is characterized by *the semantic short-circuiting of its structure* since it is a 'purely' economic discourse whose major chain consists of monetary signifiers; something we might begin to explain by noting that the production of its subjective position has mainly consisted in the reinscription of *an already constituted sign system* (the money equivalent of goods) which established this sign system as key signifier. The *productive effect* of the establishment of this sign as key signifier – i.e. the subordination of the subject 'to' monetary value – consisted in the ideological valorization of surplus value; that is, in a reinscription of monetary value which passed literally unnoticed until

Marx questioned the absence, *in the discourse of the politically established capitalist,* of any indication of its production or of the redirection of surplus value within the framework of capitalist relations of production.

The repression, in the discourse of the politically established capitalist, of surplus value, following on from its hysterical valorization in the discourse of the sixteenth-century capitalist, corresponds exactly to the repression, in the political discourse of the French Revolution, of medieval debt. The social relations of production, established on a theological pattern in medieval society, are repressed in either case.

Bourgeois ideology could thus be defined as a *discourse in which a subject* (the subject of the signifier, *or in other words the subject of the production,* the signifier being a product – economic, linguistic, etc.) *has articulated the question of his own production – of his symbolic establishment – in terms of repression,* the peculiarity of the bourgeoisie being, as Marx once again remarked, that it thinks of itself as a-historical.

Defining the reality effect as the production effect of any figurative system which inscribes its figures in a scenic structure, whether or not this refers to a theatrical scene, we may note:

(a) that the scenic structure of medieval painting did not always refer to the theatre: the theatrical reference is in fact overdetermined by the original inscription of the figures in a scale model of a church, so that the relationship between the figure and the spectator reproduces that of the worshipper to the divinity, thereby inscribing within the representational framework the ideological relation of the figurative product to its producer and spectator, in other words the ideological value of the figurative product as symbol and religious offering;

(b) that one of the major signifiers of the reality effect, the eye, became inscribed in iconic representation long before any assumption of existence was made about pictorial figures. It is in fact overdetermined as a signifier by its traditional magical/religious value in Mediterranean civilizations (cf. that in Egypt). The exclusive attribution of the eye to sacred figures or, inversely, the assumption that figures are sacred because they have this eye, as in Byzantine painting, represents the monopolization, by a monotheistic church, of a divine symbol and token of protection.

It is important to take these points into account, bourgeois representation being, as we shall argue, *the product of a double repression:*

(a) of the religious determination of the medieval system of representation and its signifiers, the scenic structure and the look;

(b) of the twofold theological and social determination of the figures in medieval painting.

Indeed, as medieval representation moved away from Byzantine canons, its figurative referents consisted increasingly of objects, places, real people living at the same time as the painter, all of them 'realistic' in the strict sense of the term. And this new medium of religious representation is *the* *theologically conceived mirror image,* within a religious iconography which serves as its pretext, *of medieval society, its hierarchical organization and its political institutions.* Medieval society found its mirror image in a system of religious representation which presented Christ as the ideological referent of the king, the Shepherds as that of the rural population, etc., while drawing on social *types* – the clothes, ornaments, indeed the physical characteristics of real peasants or members of the nobility who were contemporaries of the painter – for its subject matter. This presentation of religious figures as *type characters* in turn constitutes what is really a sociological discourse. The structure of medieval society was constituted as a specular object by the inscription, in and through religious iconography (which it also transformed), of the hierarchical relations between its groups, at the moment when the hegemony of the monarchy was assured and the rise of the urban bourgeoisie had begun. This object, conceived as the ideological discourse of the monarchy (like the cathedral: see Le Goff's *Civilisation de l'Occident médiéval*), was in fact *produced and exchanged* by a bourgeoisie whose values were already being inscribed in it, in this realistic form which was to have no equivalent in aristocratic culture. The transition from this system of religious representation, overdetermined by a political discourse, to a system of secular, bourgeois representation would follow on smoothly in the schools of the North, that is in the countries where the bourgeoisie first played a major political role. This transition from a religious system of representation in which was inscribed the hierarchical structure of medieval society to the bourgeois system which replaced it allows us to understand the development of 'realistic' forms of representation, where figures refer exclusively to real characters and objects existing in the painter's own time, characters and objects inscribed within the frame of the painting as 'being there', multiplying the signs of their presence, watching the spectator.

This new status accorded to representational figures should not be thought of in existential terms; or rather, the assumption of existence they henceforth produce (however 'analogical' the representation) is the *luring effect* of the transformation of iconic discourse. We might note in this connection:

(a) that whereas in the medieval system of representation which developed out of the Byzantine tradition no assumption of existence was made about the figures themselves, originally endowed with a purely symbolic eye, such an assumption is henceforth made about these very figures – no longer the embodiment of theological figures but of living people, the painter's contemporaries, who moreover usually posed full-face (the problem is to know *how this institution of the full-face pose was determined*).

(b) The inscribing of this assumption of existence, corresponding to the entirely new status accorded to Western representation, was determined both by the persistence of the scenic structure of medieval representation (which, once again, did not refer initially to the theatre) which was in fact *repressed* within the frame of the picture, and by the abolition of the twofold inscription of the iconic religious discourse of the Middle Ages, whose signifiers consisted essentially of a series of theological figures inherited from a written tradition and a series of social types, so that this painting constituted a true scale model of medieval society, whose hierarchical structure was thus ideologically confirmed by the power of the monarchy.

Only the inscription and then the obliteration of this double signifying chain (theological/sociological) makes it possible to understand the transformation of iconic discourse which resulted in a realist ideology of painting; that is, in a kind of painting which refers uniquely to bourgeois social values (whether as objects or subjects). These developments cannot in themselves, however, adequately account for *the emphasis on the reality effect in bourgeois representation*, and the transformation in the status of the figure, or rather the whole figurative structure, its establishment as real, that is as existing from the viewpoint of an imaginary subject whom we saw in *Las Meninas* assuming the form of the king. If the effect of this *mise en scène* is that the spectator thinks of himself as occupying, in fantasy, the role of spectator of the scene, i.e. the role of the king, this is due to the fact that he has put himself in the position occupied by the painter himself, *in his actual practice*. We have argued that the figure of the producer of the representation is thus repressed, and that this repression involves the covering up of a metonymy by a metaphor or, more specifically, the inscription of the imaginary figure of the king in the spatial axis of the reality effect, i.e. the production effect of the representation's scenic structure as viewed by someone (the reflection-the eye-the king's eye). The establishment of this fantasy spectacle moreover coincides with the repression of any discourse on figurative production, or more precisely on the relations between the figurative product and the religious figures it brought to life, and on the relationship of the producer to these theological figures themselves.

One of the commonest scenes to include the figure of the medieval painter (its very recurrence is an indication of the insistence of the discourse it implies) is a standard representation of the artist as Saint Luke painting the Virgin. This scene embraces a certain number of the constants of medieval figurative systems. In it we find effects peculiar to these figurative systems, as well as themes which refer directly to the social and religious context in which such figurative products were produced and circulated – figurative products which are in fact the signifiers of a discourse on the pictorial inscription itself, on the painting as a scriptural product and on its status as such. Specifically, we find:

(i) a relationship between the figure of the saint and that of the painter in the mode of incarnation;
(ii) a painter-figure iconically overdetermined by the figure of the scriptor who thus inscribes his practice as equivalent to that of the copyist of sacred texts;

(iii) a relationship, within the presentation, of adoration between the painter and the holy figure which refers directly to actual religious practice, so that the product of the painter's work itself appears as an offering, literally inscribed in the representation as a metonymy (a miniature) of the holy figure;
(iv) a metonymic relationship between the picture which appears in the figurative structure as a miniature (or scale model both of the figure and of the representation as a whole) and the figurative structure itself (the picture within the picture).

Later on, just as the secular portrait is becoming established, the figure of the benefactor will be inscribed in the place thus sometimes occupied by the painter who, as he represented himself at work, inscribed the product of his practice as a symbol (an offering), a metonymy both of the figure represented in miniature and of the picture as a whole. *Las Meninas* reinscribes the theme of the picture within the picture as the painter's homage to his model, which in the iconic discourse of the previous era had been overdetermined by its inscription as a relationship of devotion between the believer and the divinity, and as an act of faith on the part of the scribe reproducing the text of the Scriptures. In the secular context of Velázquez's painting, the model is the king, i.e. a historical character and contemporary of the painter's, and the homage no longer consists in the inscription of the painting-in-miniature as an offering which stands metonymically for the model, but in *the painting as a whole* (i.e. in the household scene), *as a homage addressed to the king by all the figures*. The metonymy of the model persists (the reflection in the mirror), its function being to indicate that this homage is indeed addressed to the king in person, which is to say that he is present (and alive) in the representational fantasy. In other words, the painting's symbolic message (the homage to the king) is supported by all the figures, instead of being conveyed by a metonymy of the figurative structure which is the symbol itself. What has been established in *Las Meninas* is the *superimposition* or *short-circuiting, in the spatial axis of the representation, of a double play of signifiers*, relating on the one hand to respect for the king and on the other hand to the presence of the king. *Two metonymies are thus superimposed in the axis of the representation* (the reflection in the mirror/the gaze of the figures and everything in their bearing which marks their respect for the royal personage) – something that should not be attributed uniquely to Velázquez's genius since, by virtue of its sociological determination, it was bound to occur in the context of a royal offering. And so, the model having disappeared from the frame of the representation, the offering consists in the representation itself, in which the painter still includes himself, as in religious paintings, by painting the now abstract model to indicate that this painting is an offering, but this time in the role of the *metteur en scène*, discreetly present and ready to slip away into the wings.

What is so admirable in this painting is that it includes the whole figurative structure of scenes like those which represent the painter as Saint Luke painting the Virgin (their properly iconic structure, as well as the whole network of signifiers making up their social and theological discourse on the status of the pictorial product and its producer), while at the same time bringing about the transformation of this figurative structure determined by its inscription within medieval and monarchic society, the society which will belong (and at the time Velázquez was painting often already did belong) to the bourgeoisie. In *Las Meninas*, then, the metaphor of the representation has taken the place of the metonymy of the miniature included within the frame; and in this way the inscription in the representation of the figurative structure as a metonymy of its model – the social and theological determination of its discourse as an offering to the divinity or the prince – has been incorporated (repressed) within the figurative structure. Bourgeois representation will subsequently ban *all effects of style whose sociological and religious meaning goes against the egalitarian ideology of the bourgeoisie.* That is to say, it will repress everything which, in the medieval *mise en scène*, signified the symbolic relationship of the painter, i.e. the theological subject, to the prince and to God; in other words, it will repress the discourse on the debt of the producer to the prince or divinity, *whose signifier consisted in the figurative product itself. Bourgeois figures, as mirror reflections of their model, will literally owe their existence to no one,* and the figure of the Master (*Maître*, cf. Lacan's statement that his discourse signifies '*m'être*') will be established in the painting.

The only thing that will survive, from a *mise en scène* addressed to God or the prince, will be the eye of the figure, now deemed to be looking only at the spectator and to signify only the living presence of the figure from the viewpoint of an essentially similar, real subject. In this way, representation becomes well and truly established as a phantasm of a production process about which we know nothing because its social and theological overdetermination is repressed, along with any discourse on the function and status of the figurative product during the Middle Ages. And it is this which explains the social value accorded to figurative products whose main characteristic, the transparency of the figures in relation to the real objects to which they correspond, has meant that they are thought of as the actual equivalents of these objects, this being the end result of a complex process involving the repression and overdetermination of medieval figurative systems. The important thing, once more, is to distinguish, in this process of repression, something other than the simple obliteration of the double signifying chain (theological/social) which constituted the semantic material of medieval figurative structures. What has been repressed, i.e. *reinscribed in the mode of repression,* is the symbolic value (in the sense of religious offering) of medieval figurative structures, through a process similar to that which determined the production of bourgeois political ideology and capitalist discourse. In either case, there is repression of the social relations of production which, in medieval society, were determined theologically by the institution of debt.

Translated by Annwyl Williams

Notes

1 Interpellation is the process, described in detail by Althusser, of inscribing a spectator/subject within an apparatus or system of representation by building on the physical inclination of the subject to misunderstand its relation to the real. See Louis Althusser, 'Notes on Ideological State Apparatuses', *Lenin and Philosophy*, London, New Left Books, 1971.

2 Metaphor and metonymy: rhetorical structures that derive, respectively, from Freudian categories of the dream work – condensation and displacement – serve within the Lacanian theory of language to indicate the paths the signifier can take in the process of signification. They are the terms of adjustment between the primary and secondary processes. In a metaphoric structure, one signifier displaces another, by calling up a third contiguous to it, thus indicating symbolically the representation of desire. Both metaphor and metonymy serve to figure repressed desire. For a detailed account with respect to cinema, see Christian Metz's 'Imaginary Referent' in 'The Imaginary Signifier', *Screen*, vol. 16, no. 2, Summer 1975.

3 The distinction between symbol and sign in this context is detailed in Julia Kristeva's *Le Texte du Roman*, The Hague, Mouton, 1970.

16 Jean-Louis Comolli: 'Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field'

('Technique et Idéologie: Caméra, perspective, profondeur de champ', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 229 and 230, May–June and July 1971)[1]

Most film criticism has now (under pressure) come round to admitting that all film is a product of ideology, made in and expressing an ideology, and therefore in some way related to politics – whatever claims to 'art' it may make for itself in the first instance. Signs of the acceptance of film's ideological status can be seen in two areas: (1) in the increasing number of special issues (of journals hitherto predominantly cinephile) on 'political cinema' or 'politics and cinema'; and (2) in the increased market value of films with explicitly political themes.

But at a certain point any critical analysis of the ideological character of cinema meets the strongest resistance. Curiously, this is not expressed as a claim for the autonomy of aesthetic processes: it is an insistent claim for the autonomy of technical processes. Everything involved in the field of film technique – equipment, methods, standards, conventions – is vigorously *defended* from any ideological implications by a number of critics, film-makers, and naturally the majority of technicians themselves. They will agree (more or less) that film has a relationship to ideology on the level of themes, production (its system of economic relations), distribution (its readings) and even on the level of its realization (the *metteur en scène* subject), but never in the area of the technical practices, the apparatus, which *manufacture* film from beginning to end. They demand a place apart for film technique, beyond ideologies, outside history, social processes, and the construction of meaning. Film technique, we are told, is precisely that – a technique, and *neutral*. It is capable of expressing everything without expressing anything of itself, expressing only what it is required to express (by the film-maker and the technician). It is a vehicle, a means, something which transmits and has as its end the obliteration of any trace of itself from that transmission. And indeed common sense can supply no lack of examples to demonstrate that the camera gives disinterested service to both the fascist and the communist film, that the close-up is characteristic of both Eisenstein and Hollywood, etc.

This *demand* for 'a place apart' for cinematographic technique needs to be noted and questioned. Why is the diffuse and insistent discourse of technicians (often backed up by film-makers and critics, especially now that the question is becoming important) so anxious both to defend the area of technical and mechanical practices from any influence from and/or bearing on ideology, and to place technique so firmly in the wings rather than on the stage where meanings are in play? For setting technique aside and holding it back also means giving it a place, making it fill a slot in the ideological discourse of technicians and in the technical and/or technicist ideology. For this discourse to happen, a particular concept – an *image* – of film technique first had to be established. The discourse then had as its function to confirm and perpetuate it.

Because it has the virtue of formulating the implications of this discourse-of-the-technicians, the long article by Jean-Patrick Lebel, 'Cinema and Ideology',[2] will serve as my main reference (purely for the problems under discussion; other points raised by Lebel call for separate discussion).

Lebel writes: 'film is clearly a scientific invention, not a product of ideology, since it is founded on a real body of knowledge and on the properties of the matter which it activates; the proof is that it functions, and that by activating specific matter (various equipment + properties of light + persistence of vision) in order to film a material object it produces a material image of that object.[3]

Or: 'it is not the film-maker, but the camera, a passive recording instrument, which reproduces the object or objects filmed in the form of an image-reflection constructed according to the laws of the rectilinear propagation of light waves (which in fact define the effect known as perspective). The phenomenon is perfectly open to scientific explanation and has nothing to do with ideology.'[4]

Clearly implicit in these extracts we find elements that back up Lebel's argument and provide a focus for the discourse of technicians under discussion here (a discourse which can be heard and read in the film schools and universities where technique is taught and in the textbooks which propagate it, etc.). Namely:

1 the fact that film technique inherits something from science (the legitimacy and importance of this inheritance will be examined in Part III; for the moment the principle may be taken as given);
2 from this is it deduced that film technique also inherits the 'scientificness' of Science – in this case the double virtue of precision and neutrality.

Before examining the various ideological embodiments of depth of field – a specific technical process selected here for its exemplary qualities – I shall need to look at a number of questions surrounding the process which goes by the *mythical name* of THE INVENTION OF THE CINEMA. In other words, questions about the ideology, the mythology even, which has grown up around the relationship between (the origins of) film *technique* and its 'founding *sciences*'. (I will do no more than indicate a number of directions for research, to be taken up and developed more systematically, since the complexity of this as yet little explored problem demands extended consideration from more than one direction.)

I. A dual origin

The ideological place of 'the basic apparatus'

We should point out at the outset that when he wrote 'Cinema and Ideology', J.-P. Lebel was intervening in a debate initiated by Marcelin Pleynet in *Cinéthique* and developed by that journal and by *Cahiers*.[5]

What did Pleynet say?

> Have you noticed how all the many possible discourses on the cinema assume the *a priori* existence of a non-signifying apparatus/producer of images which gives impartial service in any situation, to the left and to the right? Before thinking about their 'militant role' would film-makers not be well advised to think about the ideology produced by the apparatus (the camera) which defines the cinema? The film camera is an ideological instrument in its own right, an instrument that expresses bourgeois ideology before expressing anything else. . . . It produces a directly inherited code of perspective, built on the model of the scientific perspective of the Quattrocento. What needs to be shown is the meticulous way in which the construction of the camera is geared to 'rectify' any anomalies in perspective in order to reproduce in all its authority the code of specular vision laid down by renascent humanism. . . . The point at which photography was invented is not without interest: Hegel was closing off the History of Painting; painting itself was showing signs of awareness that the science of perspective governing its figurative relationships arose out of a specific cultural system. . . . It was at this point that Niepce invented photography, called in to reinforce the Hegelian closure and to produce the standards and prohibitions of the reigning code of perspective by mechanical means. (Niepce, 1765–1833, was a contemporary of Hegel, 1770–1831.) In my view, only when we have thought through this phenomenon and the way in which the apparatus (the camera) determines the structure of the reality it represents will cinema be able to consider its relations to ideology in an objective way.[6]

Let us take as our basis the questions raised by this text:

1 The relation between the photographic – and then the cinematic – image and the pictorial representation of space set out by the Quattrocento code of perspective which dominated Western painting for five centuries, though not exclusively. (On this point see the works of Francastel, which note the coexistence of several figurative systems.[7]) The way this relationship acts at the level of ideologies and cultural representations.
2 The relation between the invention of photography and the invention

of the cinema, between photography and cinema: correspondences and differences. The question of the technical 'birth' of the cinema.
3 The determining role of the 'camera' apparatus in thinking about the ideology of film technique. This last question will be my starting-point.

When first Pleynet, then the editors of *Cinéthique*, then Jean-Louis Baudry[8] pose the question of the inscription of emergent cinema into a given socio-historical moment (the second half of the nineteenth century) and into the dominant ideology of the time, one notes that they pass over film technique as a whole to centre directly on the *camera* as 'the apparatus' which determines the structure of the (cinematic) reality it represents'.

The notion of the 'basic apparatus' (Baudry) is advanced in the following way: the camera is that apparatus that produces the 'visible' in accordance with the system of 'monocular' perspective governing the representation of space; it is therefore in the area of the camera that we should seek, for cinematic material as a whole, the perpetuation of this code of representation and the ideology it sustains (or reasserts). Once film-making's key piece (the camera) falls to ideology, it is in fact difficult to see how film could hope to escape.

It is striking that when J.-P. Lebel criticizes the positions taken by Pleynet, *Cinéthique* and ourselves – in his attempt to disprove the 'accusation' of 'an ideological nature' brought against the cinema – he too chooses the camera as the object and dominant figure in his demonstration. True, since he wants to meet the adversary on his own ground, and ideology has been placed 'in' the camera, he has to banish it from the camera, replacing it with the guarantee of an affiliation with Science. But it is still the camera which comes into question, *alone* once again. And again it has the difficult position of both *representing* film technique as a whole and *transposing* onto that whole its 'perfectly scientific' nature (in contradistinction to the theories which would have it 'purely ideological').

One of Lebel's initial observations does, it is true, seem to reflect a certain uneasiness which is a kind of symptom of the distortion involved in making the camera the centrepiece of the debate.

> Note that the word camera here (and in everything that follows[9]) does not just designate the normally black object which goes under the name of 'camera'; it takes in the whole of the technical operation, from filming to projection, which brings about the mechanical reproduction of reality in the form of images. This is also sometimes referred to as 'the camera effect' by the ideological tendency in question here. In other words, the term camera should not be understood in the limited sense of the object itself. As used here it comprehends the whole operation and its system of technical processes (all based on the same scientific principles deriving from the laws of propagation of light) which are precisely what characterize the cinema as a means of reproduction.[10]

Lebel gives a clear explanation – but no criticism – of the way in which the 'ideological tendency' he is criticizing brings about a *hypostasis of the* *camera*. But there is nothing in the remainder of his work to indicate that he is not doing the same thing. The contrary in fact, since the cornerstone of his discourse is the 'scientificity' of the camera:

> The camera is not an ideological instrument in itself. It does not produce a specific ideology, any more than its structure inevitably condemns it to reflecting the dominant ideology. It is an instrument, and ideologically neutral precisely because it is an instrument, an apparatus, a machine. Its basis is scientific and it is constructed on that scientific basis, not *according to* an ideology of representation (in the speculative sense of the term).[11]

The camera, then.

For it is here in this *camera-location* that a confrontation occurs between the two discourses – one setting film technique in ideology, the other in science. Note that whether we are told that the essentials of the technical system which produces film have their founding origins in the body of scientific knowledge (discourse of the technicians), or that this system is governed by the ideological representation and demands dominant at the time it was perfected (attempts to elaborate a materialist theory of cinema), in both cases the example given is *always* the instrument which produces the cinematic *image*, and it *alone*, seen solely from the point of view of *optics*. (With Pleynet in fact the focus of attention is somewhat arbitrary and in the early stages bears on just *one* of the components of the camera – the *lens*. For Lebel, though he mentions persistence of vision, the – constantly evoked – scientific frame of reference is *Geometrical Optics*, the 'laws of propagation of light'.)

We are therefore dealing with a specific *image* of the camera, used metonymically to *represent* the whole of film technique – *the part which stands for the whole*. It is *brought forward* as the *visible* part standing for *the whole of technique*. This symptomatic *displacement* now has to be questioned in the very way we formulate the relationship between Technique and Ideology.

'Deputizing' the camera to represent the whole of film technique is not only a synecdoche (the part for the whole), it is also a reductive operation (from the whole to the part). It needs to be questioned because it reproduces and confirms *on the level of theory* that separation *between the visible part* of film technique *and the 'invisible' part* which constantly marks the technical practice of the cinema. (This is evident in the practice of film-makers and technicians; in the spontaneous ideology of that practice; but also in the 'idea' or ideological image which the film-going public constructs for itself in film work, concentrating on shooting and the studio to the exclusion of laboratory processes and editing.) The visible part of film technique (camera, shooting, crew, lights, screen) *suppresses* the invisible part (frame lines, chemistry, fixing and developing baths and laboratory processing, negatives, the cuts and joins of the editing, the sound-track, projector, etc), and the latter is generally relegated to the unreasoned, 'unconscious' part of the cinema. It is characteristic, for example, that Lebel, who is so anxious to claim the regulation of the cinema by scientific principles, deduces this claim solely from geometrical optics, only once mentioning persistence of vision, which is after all what specifically distinguishes the cinema from photography – the synthesis of movement (and the scientific work which made it possible, cf. below). He overlooks altogether that other patron science of cinema and photography – photochemistry – without which the camera would still be only a *camera obscura*. As for Pleynet's observations, they apply equally to the Quattrocento *camera obscura*, the seventeenth-century magic lantern, the various projection devices which were the forerunners of the cinematograph, and the still camera; their chief concern is clearly to note connections between these various mechanisms of perspective and the camera, but they risk missing precisely what the camera conceals (which does not include the lens). In the final analysis, film, the film feed systems, emulsion, frame lines, and not just the lens, are all essentials of cinema, without which there would be no cinema.

It is not clear therefore that what is happening at the moment on the level of practice ought to be reproduced on the level of theory; the reduction of the hidden part of technique to its visible part carries the risk of reasserting the domination of the visible, i.e. *the ideology of the visible* (and what it implies: the masking and effacement of work). Defining the ideology of the visible, Serge Daney said:

> [The cinema] postulates that from the 'real' to the visual and from the visual to its filmed reproduction the same truth was *reflected* infinitely, with neither distortion nor loss. And . . . in a world where one readily says 'I see' for 'I understand', such a dream did not come about by chance, for the dominant ideology, which sets up the 'real = visible' equation, has every interest in encouraging it. . . . But why not retrace the issue further back still, and challenge that which is both served by the camera and preceded it: the quite blind trust in the visible, the gradually acquired hegemony of the eye over the other senses, a society's taste and need for seeing itself reflected, etc. . . . The cinema is therefore connected to the Western metaphysical tradition, a tradition of seeing and sight for which it fulfils the photological vocation. What is photology and what indeed might the discourse of light be? A teleological discourse, undoubtedly, if it is true that the teleology 'consists of neutralizing duration and force in favour of *the illusion* of simultaneity and form' (Derrida).[12]

Undoubtedly, it was this 'hegemony of the eye', this 'visualization', this ideology of the visible linked to Western logocentric traditions, that Pleynet had in mind when he stressed the impregnation of the basic apparatus by the Quattrocento code of perspective. The image produced by the camera could not fail to confirm and reinforce 'the code of specular vision defined by renascent humanism', which placed the human eye at the centre of the system of representation, thereby excluding other systems and assuring the domination of the eye over all the other organs of sense:

the eye (Subject) enthroned in the place of the divine (humanism's critique of Christianity).

A situation of *theoretical paradox* is thus reached, constituted as follows: on the one hand, there is a stress on the dominance of the camera (the visible) over film technique as a whole, which it is assumed to represent, inform and programme (in the role of *model*); on the other hand, there is a desire to expose the camera, in its conception and construction, as being subject to the dominant ideology of the visible.

The argument places the camera in a privileged position in order to make it the origin of an ideological chain into which the cinema has been integrated. The theoretical grounds for singling out the camera in this way clearly include the principal and determining role of the camera in film production; but if they also include everything that is implicated in this apparatus, then the position must be taken further, or it will risk remaining imprisoned in the same chain.

The perspective has therefore to be changed. That is, we have to take account of what the act of designating the camera in this way brushes aside if we are to ensure that this emphasis on the camera – necessary and productive though it is – is not itself reinstalled in the very ideology it is aimed at.

A materialist theory of cinema (it seems to me) must bring to the surface the ideological 'heritage' of the camera (as well as its 'scientific heritage', the two being, as we shall see, not at all mutually exclusive, as Lebel seems to think); and at the same time it must bring out the ideological investments which have been made in the camera. For neither in the production of film nor in the history of the invention of the camera is the camera alone at issue. If the way that it involves technique, science and/or ideology is in fact determining, it is only so in relation to other determining factors. These may well be secondary in relation to the camera, but then this *secondary status* has to be examined – that is, the status and function of all that the camera conceals.

To emphasize once again the danger implicit in making the cinema as a whole function on the *reduced model* of the camera (the risk is one of mystification since the camera then acts as an ideological screen in the very discourses which assign it this ideological place), it is enough to note the almost complete lack of any theoretical work on either the soundtrack, for instance, or on laboratory technique (as if the vision of light, geometrical optics, had cancelled out its working, the chemistry of light). This neglect can only be explained by the dominance of the visible in the practice of cinema as in thinking about the cinema.

For example, it is surely time to *expose* the ideological role of two techniques (where mutually reinforcing instruments + process + knowledge + practice combine to realize an *aim*, an objective which then constitutes, grounds and sanctions the technique). The techniques in question, *grading* and *sound mixing*, are located in the hidden and unconsidered area of cinema (except with very rare film-makers, Godard, Rivette, Straub . . .). We shall attempt to deal with this in Part III.

Birth = postponement: the invention of the cinema

The cinema's long period of gestation (which was not without its 'inexplicable' blanks and gaps during practically the whole of the nineteenth century) has been widely studied but poorly understood;[13] it has also accumulated a mass of often unrelated events which seem more or less accidental, fortuitous, even contradictory – so much so that it is scarcely possible to see any reassuring 'progress' there. Probably for these reasons this 'birth' period is an anchorage and reinforcement for the majority of the current fantasies and myths of the cinema. Theoreticians and historians in search of its origins seem to have been motivated by the same desires as André Bazin: 'If the origins of an art allow one to see something of its essence . . .'.[14] So it should come as no surprise if this fleeting 'essence' is never more fleeting than in that space, already the realm of mythology, in which it is sought.

Nor if the decisive intervention of science in that space is less certain than Lebel would have us believe.

Take Bazin himself – and on these questions it is useful to refer to him frequently, because the very idealism and humanism of his interpretations serve as pointers to the ideological basis of the invention of cinema, re-marking it and therefore constituting a valuable and revealing analytical tool. Anticipating the arguments of the historian Jacques Deslandes, Bazin puts the emphasis on the 'craft' nature of the discoveries which led to the cinema, in order, one suspects, to marvel at it the more. In order, too, to reintegrate this invention of a machine into the sphere of man's myths and dreams – literally to *humanize* it by showing how insignificant and backward a part was played by technology, machines and the sciences themselves, in comparison to the power of the ancient and clearly mythical dream of 'fixing' the image of life, of *representing* the living:[15]

> What a reading of Georges Sadoul's admirable book on the origins of the cinema (*L'Invention du cinéma*, Denoël) paradoxically reveals, despite the author's Marxist viewpoint, is an apparent overturning of the relations between the economic and technical evolution and the imagination of the investigators. Everything seems to happen as if the path of historical causality from economic infrastructure to ideological superstructure needed to be reversed, as if basic technical discoveries had to be seen as fortuitous accidents whose relationship to the preliminary idea of the inventors was essentially secondary. The cinema is an idealist phenomenon. The idea of it existed already set up in men's minds as in some platonic heaven. What strikes us most of all is the obstinate resistance of matter to the idea, rather than any stimulus from the technical field to the imagination of the pioneer. Moreover, the cinema owes virtually nothing to the scientific mind. Its fathers are not scientists (with the exception of Marey, but significantly he was only interested

> in the analysis of movement, not in the inverse process of its reconstitution).[16] Even Edison was basically no more than a do-it-yourself genius, a giant in the Inventors' Competition. Niepce, Muybridge, Leroy, Demeny, Louis Lumière himself, were monomaniacs, reckless dabblers and improvisers, or at best ingenious industrialists. . . . A real understanding of the discovery of cinema cannot be arrived at by way of the technical discoveries which made it possible.[17]

Note how Bazin brings out all the arguments and offers every conceivable support. The primacy of the 'dream' over science, carefully set in the idealist framework emphasized by Bazin himself – for *Cinéthique* this was inevitably supporting 'evidence' of the cinema's 'natural ideological bent': 'Bazin always stressed the idealism which had presided over the invention of the camera, and the non-scientific, craft character of its construction. The camera fulfilled man's ancient dream – of reproducing reality, reproducing himself.'[18]

This is the text (and via it the passage of Bazin quoted above) which Lebel opposes in his discourse on the scientific nature of the camera. But the opposite camp is not confined to Bazin and *Cinéthique*. Pressure against allowing any determining role in the matter to Science is characteristic of the great majority of historians, including Sadoul and Deslandes (whose works correct certain of Sadoul's errors but finally have the same emphasis). Given this, Lebel cannot avoid revealing some uncertainty in both the counter-arguments he produces.

1 He rightly observes that prior to the industrial stage of social development, all technical-scientific inventions could only be made in craft conditions: '[This is] to confuse types of production (artisanal/industrial) with scientific research proper. As if all the great inventors and researchers of history up to the twentieth century had not *all* been artisans.'[19] We agree entirely. The question is not one of knowing whether or not the 'inventors' of the cinema were artisans (they were, more or less inevitably), but to what extent, in spite of or because of their craft status, their preoccupations and their work can also claim a scientific status. This is in the end the only important question, and it is precisely the one that Lebel evades.

2 The inconsistency of Lebel's other argument is more striking still.

> When this allusion to the artisanal character of the invention of photography and the cinema uses, in order to disqualify its scientific aspect, the fact that cinema made concrete one of man's ancient 'dreams', whose ideological aspect is obvious (and/but historically determined), it is simply straying into irrelevance. This is a bit like bringing a case against the aeroplane – also invented in artisanal conditions – for giving concrete form to an ancient dream of man's whose ideological content is no less clear (and also historically determined). As if, in order to combat the ideological effect of the Icarus myth, the constructors of socialist (or materialist) aeroplanes had to denounce the ideology produced by the aeroplane by 'deconstructing' it – if not quite completely to

> break it up, at least enough to ensure sufficient discomfort to the passengers to disrupt their fascination with the sky and constantly remind each of them that it is not they who are flying; they only do so thanks to a *machine*, and so their concrete relationship with the real world remains unchanged.[20]

Lebel does, it is true, take the trouble to add: 'Of course, I am caricaturing the argument.' But this scarcely lessens the excesses of his comparison. Misled by his concern to make the cinema (or the camera) a *scientific object* and a pure technical system, he fails to see that comparing it to another technical system like the aeroplane is simply to exclude the cinema from the area in which it operates (and in which the aeroplane, for all that it is a means of 'communication', does not operate): this area being the processes of signification, ideology itself. It is precisely because the cinema (scientific object or not) is a signifying practice, because it produces meaning and ideology, that the fact that it fulfils 'one of man's ancient dreams' carries weight, that this debate concerns us, and that Lebel found it appropriate to make an intervention.

By way of a preliminary observation, it is significant that all film historians (including Deslandes, to whom we shall now turn) are uneasy when it comes to fixing an *anterior limit* to their field of work. The factors which make them choose one event, date or invention rather than another as inaugural are of the most arbitrary kind. This is because the prehistory of the cinema is *lost* in the mists of time and myth: the cinema not only fulfils one of 'man's ancient dreams', it also perpetuates a series of 'ancient' empirical realities and 'ancient' techniques of representation.

Deslandes for example chooses 1826 and the invention of photography (actually of just the light-sensitive photographic plate) by Niepce and Daguerre, but this is giving a privileged status to just one of the constituent techniques of the cinema – and the one for which it is possible to fix an exact historical date. For the remainder (camera, breakdown and synthesis of movement) he is inevitably obliged by their ancient and substantial history to look further back.

As an optical system, the camera, as we know, is simply a (barely perfected) adaptation of the Quattrocento *camera obscura*. But this dark room was known to the Egypt of the Pharaohs, 347 years before Christ, and to Arab science of the ninth century, while Bessy and Chardans' *Dictionnaire du cinéma* details its various manifestations and improvements since Bacon (1260).

Given its long existence, the *camera obscura* as an instrument was not only known, but handled, used and studied by scientists and artists from century to century throughout our history, well before there was any concern to understand the why and the how of the small inverted image faintly visible in its depths.

Things become rather more troublesome when we see that the same situation applies for the phenomenon which constitutes the other major pivot of the technical specificity of the cinema, the phenomenon known since the nineteenth century as 'persistence of vision', but which had been known and studied at least since the Arab astronomer Al Hazen (965–1038), author of *The Elements of Optics* (which also mentions the *camera obscura*). Not only did Al Hazen criticize the then dominant theory of vision, which postulated the emission of 'luminous rays' by the eye, noting the persistence of luminous impressions after the eyelids close; he also described perfectly the continuous circle which the eye perceives when a flaming torch is rotated in front of it at great speed.

Thus the main lines of the invention of the cinema – the production of an *image* of the world and the illusion of *continuity* brought about by the movement of objects – were established several centuries before the light-sensitive plate, the photograph, was produced. This must already considerably modify the role played by science as such, since (1) the two phenomena in question arose out of empirical observation ('optical illusions', the importance of which we will come back to later), and (2) they were observed, described and 'explained' in each period in terms of the dominant philosophies, in other words ideologically, even if the systems of explanation were graced by the name of science. (The 'epistemological break' for the *camera obscura* only came with the slow and erratic establishment of geometrical optics in the seventeenth century, and for visual persistence with psycho-physiology in the twentieth century.)

Much the same observations apply when we try to arrive at an official date for the invention of cinema.

First, as Bazin observed, there is the relatively modest role played by both science and the scientist as such in the production of this instrument. As we have already seen, the *camera obscura*, while it demonstrated the linear propagation of light rays (without as yet being its experimental proof), was conceived and perfected outside virtually any established scientific knowledge on the nature of light and vision. The only scientific practice with which it has any real connection is actually the system of laws which structured *perspectiva artificialis*.[21]

It is not in this area, therefore, that the decisive development came. The perfecting of the photographic plate was to be more significant. It represents a leap forward, prepared for, certainly, by the researches of Niepce on lithographic processes and ways of copying engravings by means of a chemical process. It remains true, nevertheless, that this leap forward was made without the help of any scientific hypothesis on either the precise nature of light or its chemistry. For confirmation one has only to cite Niepce: 'To discover among the emanations of a light-sensitive liquid an agent which would be capable of imprinting in an accurate and durable way images transmitted by optical processes: I do not mean of course in all their vivid variety of colours, but in all the gradations of tone between black and white.'[22] As for Daguerre, we know that what led him to research the possibilities of 'a new method of fixing the views found in nature without recourse to an artist' was the *trompe l'oeil* shows of the Diorama (which operated with great success from 1822 and in which 'light, noise and everything else combined to give the viewer a perfect illusion of reality').[23] To which should be added that it was only more than a century later (1940–45) that the action of light on a sensitized plate could be explained theoretically.[24]

It was undoubtedly in the case of 'persistence of vision' that the importance of scientific research was greatest. In 1824 the English mathematician Roget published a series of experiments on what he called 'a curious optical illusion', the stroboscopic effect. A few years later (1830), and almost simultaneously, the physicists Faraday in England and especially Plateau in Belgium published the results of their experiments with cogged wheels rotated in the same or opposite directions. From these experiments Plateau derived the *Phenakistiscope* or *Fantascope* (1833), a scientific curiosity which became a fashionable toy. At the very same time (again) Stampfer, Professor of Applied Geometry at the University of Vienna, produced his 'stroboscopic discs', identical to Plateau's plates, and constructed the *Zootrope*.

Deslandes attributes this sudden *coalescing* of research and instruments to a revival of interest in scientific circles in problems raised by the mechanism of sight. Bazin also wonders about it: 'It is worth noting that without any necessary scientific connection the work of Plateau and Niepce was almost contemporaneous; it was as if investigators had withheld their interest in the synthesis of movement for centuries, waiting for chemistry – quite independently of optics – to interest itself in the automatic fixation of the image.'

What we have to account for therefore are the causes of this 'postponement', or of the contemporaneity of work on photography and movement. It seems clear that these are not located in the respective state of the sciences concerned . . . Rather we have to look at the crack which photography made in the systems of figurative representation of the world, at the questioning it provoked of the central role of the human eye, its solar place and its intimate relations with the world (intimacy of Subject in relation to Life, henceforth mediated and disturbed by a machine): a role of the eye which photography tended to duplicate, substituting itself as a perfected version of the eye, its privileged representative. In other words, we have to look at ideology.

At a certain point, the human eye was suddenly seen as neither altogether unique, nor quite irreplaceable, nor very perfect. Our position (advanced as a hypothesis and a reworking of Bazin's proposition) is that this point was arrived at when the invention of photography (of the light-sensitive plate) perfected the *camera obscura* and thereby achieved what generations of painters had for centuries asked of the technique of artificial perspective (the possibility of copying nature faithfully: 'The most excellent method of painting is that which imitates best, which makes the painting resemble most closely the natural object it represents,' wrote Leonardo). The first photograph, as we know, shows a *perspective* of roofs. The moment, then, when the triumph of monocular perspective as a system of representation in which the eye of the spectator (painter, Subject) occupies the centre, directs the vanishing lines, governs the points of departure and convergence of the light rays, seems to be assured. This is the moment when the supremacy of the eye is challenged (the simple lens of the *camera obscura* – corresponding, as Leonardo had observed, to the crystalline lens of the eye – becomes the 'camera lens'). A development which backs up the eye by preserving its principles of representation of the world and the codes constructed on its normality, but which at the same time undermines the hegemony of the eye and transcends it.

The probable effects of such a twofold development, at once a confirmation and a modification, are a growing confidence in a perspectival and analogous representation of the world (the photographic image cannot be argued with, it shows the real world in all its truth), and a crisis of confidence in the organ of vision which until then had ruled over all representation as its official standard (scientifically, through the 'laws of scientific perspective'). One is reminded of Leonardo's advice: 'For the first tree, take a firmly fixed sheet of glass and position your eye equally firmly. Trace the outline of the first tree on to the glass. Then raise the glass on its side until the outline of the tree you have drawn overlaps the outline of the real tree; then colour your drawing so that it corresponds to the original in colour as well as shape and if you shut one eye they both seem to be painted on the glass an equal distance away.'[25]

The sudden interest of science in 'optical illusions'[26] can be seen as a symptom of this crisis of confidence. Devalorized and *decentred* by the camera eye, the human eye could once again become the object of scientific research and experiment. Aberrations reappeared, both within and against the ideology which set the eye up as a standard sanctioned by the laws of perspective. As we have said, it wasn't that these 'illusions' had not been familiar for a long time, even to the point where for scientists and some philosophers they had undermined any possibility of total confidence in the human eye. But doubt on the scientific level in some sense provoked a compensating and cushioning reaction on the level of ideology, so that the inscription of the doubt and the deficiency was systematically compensated for by the inscription of the normality and centrality of the eye. In this sense we agree with Marcelin Pleynet that the code of the *perspectiva artificialis* acted as a repressive system.[27]

If final proof is needed that the invention of the cinema only came about as a response to an ideological demand, it can be found in the total contradiction evident between the projects, inventions and declarations of the majority of the successive inventors of the cinema and the position of one of their number, the physiologist Marey, who undoubtedly came closest to producing the definitive apparatus but saw no advantage in it from a scientific point of view. What dominates what Deslandes calls 'the search for the absolute' and Bazin 'the myth of total cinema' is a general striving for the perfect and complete reproduction of life: photographic image + depth + movement + colour and sound (as a *Temps* journalist rather naively put it, science 'is making giant strides and little by little will succeed in conquering death, its only obstacle and enemy'). Marey, on the other hand, perfected the *chronophotograph*, distinguished from the camera chiefly by the fact that it used photographic paper rather than film. But, as Deslandes points out: 'A gulf separated the chronophotograph from the film camera and this was not just a technical detail. . . . It was the very object of the apparatus. The film camera has as its essential object the production of a long strip of images which when run through a projector will create an illusion of movement. The chronophotograph's sole function was to record movement, to fix it.'[28] The physiologist was thus concerned with the destructuring and analysis of movement, and if he studied the possibilities of projecting his images and perfected a number of models of the *chronophotographic projector*, it was so that he could observe recorded movement several times over. This is why he had no thought of working with film, but was satisfied with an *endless loop*: 'In order to grasp the nature of movement in a clear way it is useful to be able to reproduce it several times over. This happens naturally with the apparatus which functions on a rotating disc. But as we have to use a roll of film paper in order to produce images, the ends must be joined so that it will run continuously and pass the series of images through the lens over and over again.'[29] These same concerns led him to condemn the cinema in specific terms: 'Animated photographs have fixed for ever essentially fleeting movements . . . but in the end what they show the eye could have seen directly; they add nothing to the power of our sight, remove none of the illusions. The real value of a scientific method is the way that it compensates for the inadequacy of our senses and corrects their errors.'[30] As Deslandes says, 'He saw no interest in projecting "life as such" onto the screen.'[31] Moreover, in his own field of research – the physiology of movement – Marey soon found the realism of the photographic image an *obstacle*, which led him to denaturalize his scene: black background, black clothing, one leg often swathed in black to avoid blurring the trace of the other, and finally reflector bands on the arms and legs, these being the only things recorded by the camera, the result being a kind of graphics: 'The animated images have been "fixed" into geometric figures. The illusion of the senses has faded, but it has made way for the satisfaction of the intellect.'[32]

A fairly careful reading of the history of the invention of the cinema thus reveals the distortion involved in exaggerating, in the interests of the objectivist cause, the theoretical and practical role played by science in its invention. But while this history (and I have done little more than reformulate some of its specific problems here) may lack pointers towards Science, it does point to *Economics* as a major determining factor in the establishment of cinematographic technique; and, through a twofold social demand/response process, economics is linked to ideology.

It is in fact as both plural and fragmented that the birth of the cinema emerges from all its 'Histories': scattered and sporadic, beginning anew with each new 'apparatus', each additional technical detail and each new patent, and at the same time held back, postponed again for a time by the lack in each successive apparatus of some technical detail, of the new solution to a new problem. So much so that what changes from one apparatus to the next is infinitesimal, as is what they are missing. With the Lumière brothers' 'new' invention (prefigured a thousand times) this dual process of 'forwards' and 'backwards' in the progress of one technique over another comes to an abrupt end, though not a miraculous one. A qualitative leap forward, but at what price?

As Bazin and Sadoul pointed out, 'there had been nothing to prevent the production of a *Phenakistiscope* or a *Zootrope* since ancient times.'[33] It could also be said that almost nothing stood in the way of photography from the moment (1550 apparently) that a lens was added to the *camera obscura*, just as *almost* nothing separated Emile Reynaud's *Praxinoscope* and its public screenings of animated pictures from the Lumière *Cinématographe*, except that the pictures were drawn, not filmed (even though the photograph had existed for some time).

What we are faced with therefore is chains of research (on the production of the image, on its fixing and reproduction, on the synthesis of movement) running in a disorganized way more or less in parallel but independently of each other, and inventions which were often simultaneous and identical (disputes over patents play a large part in histories of the cinema), developing on the common basis of old empirical observations but converging and completing each other only much later – half a century after Faraday, Plateau and Stampfer's experiments on the stroboscopic effect and visual persistence, and half a century after the invention of the photographic plate. On the other hand, in the last years of the nineteenth century, the race for patents was frantic, as numerous virtually identical recording/projecting instruments came on to the market simultaneously, and competitors reached the finishing line together.

Bazin interprets this series of postponements and delays as proof of a 'resistance on the part of matter', a backwardness even of technique and science in relation to the idea and the myth, since most of the inventors had a very clear idea of the aim and scope of their work, which was to produce a faithful and complete representation of life, to 'realize man's ancient dream'. But the real reason for the delay is not just a result of the dislocation (inevitable, according to Bazin) between the 'dream' and its 'realization'. Rather, while it is true that the 'scientific' conditions for the production of the definitive camera had come together more than half a century before its completion, the scientists themselves, as we have seen, were scarcely preoccupied with sorting out the technical-practical difficulties of its manufacture because they had little interest in that manufacture. On the other hand, from the moment the production of the camera was integrated into a social demand and an economic reality, things speeded up and there was a great deal of activity.

Deslandes, whose viewpoint is in no sense Marxist, notes:

> The importance of the Edison Kinetoscope (1892–3) is commercial and economic, not technical. It would in fact be a waste of time to try to show that some particular apparatus from 1895 or 1896, intended for the projection of moving pictures, derives more or less directly from the principle and the mechanism for which Edison took out a patent. . . . It is pointless to revive the disputes over what came first in the technical details of the first apparatus of film projection and recording. This is not where the connection lies. The essential fact and the starting-point of the process which finally led to the practical realization of animated projections was the 'nickel' which the American viewer dropped into the slot of the Edison Kinetoscope, and the twenty-five centimes which the Parisian passer-by paid in September 1894 to glue his eye to the view-finder of the Kinetoscope. . . . This is what accounts for the birth of the cinema show in France, England, Germany and the United States in 1895. Moving pictures were no longer just a laboratory experiment, a scientific curiosity. From now on they could be considered a commercially viable public spectacle. The origins of the Lumière *Cinématographe,* Robert William Paul's Theatrograph or Skladanowsky's Bioscope should be sought not in the technical descriptions of earlier patents, but in the columns of figures in the account books kept by Ralph and Gammon's Kinetoscope Company, which was entrusted with the exploitation of Edison's instruments (more than $48,000 in under a year). . . . The men who in 1895 perfected the apparatus which made possible the public screening of moving photographs for commercial ends were not disinterested researchers pursuing some Promethean dream. They were practical men.[34]

As the British historian Brian Coe had already noted: 'The introduction of the Kinetoscope and its wide public exploitation was the turning-point in the story of kinematography; not only were motion pictures shown to be practical – this had been in little doubt for many years – but they were shown to be profitable too.'[35]

It is to the mutual reinforcement of an ideological demand ('to see life as it is') and an economic demand (to make it a source of profit) that cinema owes its being. In that, it is no different from most techniques: they are directed towards the realization of an objective which one or other of these demands assigns to them and makes of them. This, it seems to me, is what has to be established and held on to in the case of the cinema; for if we are in accord with Lebel in refusing to stamp the cinema with some 'natural ideological blemish', it is not because we are trying to conceal under a loose 'scientific basis' the fact that it was under the impact of an economic demand, within an ideology and as an ideological instrument, that the cinema was conceived, made and bought from start to finish.

II. Depth of field: the double scene

Why did we choose deep focus as the example to illustrate the interplay of Technique and Ideology in the cinema and the contradictions and resistances it forces upon all current discourse on the autonomy of technique? Deep focus is, after all, only one technical effect among many. True, since Welles used it in *Citizen Kane* theoreticians and critics have conferred on deep focus the status of a stylistic method, which their readings have invested with a number of interpretations. But this is not the only reason motivating our choice. After all, you could say, what happens to deep focus once it is involved in a signifying process by a particular film-maker (or film) is what happens to the close-up or to camera movement – those 'neutral forms' which are given their force, meaning and place in an ideology by the action of the text. It is worth noting, however, that the particular theoretical discourses inspired by deep focus show little respect for any basic neutrality of forms (posited by them elsewhere). They have hastily abstracted this representational technique from the main body in order to give it a generalized and normative value, which amounts to endowing it with an intrinsic meaning[36] – and perhaps not the right one, as we shall see.

What undoubtedly dictated our choice of deep focus, more than the interest shown in it by André Bazin or Jean Mitry, is its definition: the quality which certain lenses of short focal length have (in both photography and film) of producing a uniformly sharp image of objects both close and distant, foreground and background.[37] We are therefore not moving out of the area of the problem raised above: the regulation of the camera by the code of monocular perspective. The representation of space produced on the surface of the screen by the deep focus lens is, like that constructed by the Quattrocento *perspectiva artificialis*, two-dimensional; the *illusion* of a third dimension (depth) is produced by the gradation in size of the objects represented (diminishing as they are presumed to be further away). In addition, lighting effects are exaggerated to bring out the different surfaces of this gradation as so many 'reliefs'. Because of the single, centralizing eye of the camera, the deep focus image is organized around a perpendicular axis on the surface of the screen, corresponding to Alberti's 'central ray' which, as we know, assigned to the spectator *one* strictly determined viewpoint, the real centre of the picture. This image therefore reasserts the laws of the perspectival system of representation (its 'normality', its prohibitions, and the logocentrism which it sets up). One might even add that this is the only instance of such a reassertion in cinema (or photography), for the 'flat' image which has no depth of field (that of the telephoto lens, for example) involves a different representational code and produces spatial relationships of a different kind. Montage gives film the specificity (lacking in the photograph of course, except where it is part of a collage) of being able to activate a series of different figurative codes, diverging from the laws of the Quattrocento 'model' to varying extents. The possibility of varying the kinds of lenses, and therefore the figurative codes, is always there, even if rarely exploited in a scientific and systematic way by cameramen and film-makers, and it modifies the observations of Marcelin Pleynet quoted in the first part of this article. Only two or three types of lenses (those which 'copy' normal vision most closely and are therefore in most current, or let's say most 'natural', use) are 'meticulously constructed to "rectify" any anomalies of perspective'. Nevertheless, just as the first photograph was 'in perspective', so the first lenses – those of the 'primitive' film-makers – doubtless because they were relatively simple, produced a deep-focus image with vanishing perspective which contributed in no small measure to the 'realistic effects' of the Lumière films for example. (I shall return later to this primitive deep focus.)

Bazin's 'supra-realism'

The intensification of 'realistic effects' is the first and major reason for André Bazin's interest in deep focus. In well-known texts, and using in particular the films of Orson Welles and William Wyler[38] (a choice which to a certain extent overdetermines his discourse), Bazin makes deep focus the means and the symbol of the cinema's irreversible fulfilment of its 'realist destiny', and of the 'rebirth of the realist narrative'.

But Bazin attacks the problem of deep focus from more than one direction, and not without more than one contradiction. The converging and diverging lines of the interpretation and the play of their contradictions today allow a productive re-reading of Bazin's work, which does not lie completely still, flat and coherent within its idealist boundaries. To reject his work in toto because of some obligatory opposition to its idealism is to miss seeing that its fault-lines contain relevant questions. The unifying tendency of his argument points up more oppositions than it breaks down, not only because the facts put up a resistance and thereby mark out the limits of the argument, but also because the theoretical approach itself installs contradiction as the driving principle of the history of the cinema. This history is presented as a series of conflicts between the 'ontological realism of the cinematic image' – as the location of the 'neutrality' and 'the ambiguity of the real' – and the arbitrary nature of the 'meanings imposed by montage', that is by *écriture*. (The film-makers who 'believe in reality' are set against those who believe in 'all that representation on the screen can add to the thing represented'.) For Bazin, deep focus becomes a basic element, a pivotal point, of this conflict. We in turn will need to look at Bazin's account of 'the evolution of cinematic language'. We shall need to retrace or extend his arguments in the direction of those technical, aesthetic, *or* ideological/economic factors which produce the 'evolution' in question, for Bazin tries to establish an autonomous history of cinematic forms, a closed field of influences, styles and aesthetic concerns from which, as far as possible, 'technical determinants' would be excluded; though in excluding these he also excludes ideology and economics. We shall see that while it is true that the 'history of cinematic forms' is not produced by an also 'autonomous' history of the 'technical determinants', both are nevertheless produced together within and by an ideological demand; and this demand itself is constituted by the socio-economic inscription of the cinema.

To limit the problem for the moment, let us test the relevance of Bazin's definitions of deep focus.

Leaving aside provisionally – as far as we can without confusing the issue – the relationship between deep focus and montage and the related question of the historical inscription of deep focus, we shall concentrate on that area of Bazin's discourse which centres on the 'psychological and metaphysical consequences of this technical process'. In *Citizen Kane*, Bazin writes,

> Thanks to deep focus, it was possible to deal with entire sequences in a single take and even with a static camera position throughout. Dramatic effects, previously dependent on editing, were now all produced by the movement of actors within a frame selected once and for all. . . . Welles' or Wyler's narrative is no less explicit than John Ford's, but its advantage over the latter is that it does not reject the particular effects which can be drawn from *the unity of the image in time and space.*[39] It is not therefore a matter of indifference whether an event is analysed in a fragmented way, or in its physical unity. . . . It would clearly be absurd to deny the decisive advances which the use of montage effects brought to the language of the screen, but these have been acquired *at the expense of other values* no less specific to the cinema. . . . Deep focus brings the structures of cinematic language to bear on the *intellectual relations of the spectator to the image,* and may thereby even *modify the meaning* of what is seen. . . . [It] puts the spectator into a relation with the image which is closer to that which he has with reality. One may therefore justifiably say that whatever its specific content the structure of the image is more realist. As a result it involves a more active mental attitude and even a positive contribution from the spectator to the *mise en scène.* With analytical montage, on the other hand, the spectator needs only to follow the guide, to let his attention flow with that of the director who chooses for him what he should see. A minimum of personal choice is required of him. The fact that the image has a meaning depends in part on his attention and will. . . . In its analysis of reality, montage assumes by its very nature a unity of meaning in the dramatic event. . . . Deep focus, on the contrary, *reintroduces ambiguity into the structure of the image.*[40]

It is this last point which Bazin stresses over and over again:

> As in Welles, and despite oppositions of style, neo-realism tends to give the film a sense of the ambiguity of the real[41] . . . brings on to the screen the true continuity of reality[42] . . . embraces the whole of the event[43] . . . uncovers beyond the *resources provided by montage* the secret of a narrative cinema capable of giving expression to everything without chopping the world into fragments, of revealing the hidden meaning in people and things without disturbing their natural unity[44] . . . (and finally) the image, because it bases itself on a greater realism, has at its disposal many more means of inflecting and modifying reality from within.[45]

Thus a series of principles are set up which flow from what for Bazin was a genuine *first principle*: 'the immanent ambiguity of reality', which montage and even classical Hollywood editing reduce to a single meaning or discourse (that of the film-maker), 'subjectivizing the event to the limit, since each section is determined by the intentions of the director'.[46] Filming in deep focus, on the other hand, safeguards the event because it derives from an 'aesthetics of the real' and offers the viewer 'the possibility of carrying out at least the final editing operation himself'.[47]

So (1) the real is ambiguous; (2) to give it a fragmented representation (through montage and *écriture*) is to reduce this ambiguity and replace it with a 'subjectivity' (understood as a meaning: a 'view of the world', an ideology); (3) because deep focus brings the film image closer to the 'normal' image recorded by the eye and to 'realist' vision and shows, literally, *more* things, *more of 'the real'*, it allows the reactivation of that 'ambiguity' which leaves the viewer 'free'. In other words, it aims at abolishing the difference between film and reality, the represented and the real, in order to confirm the viewer's natural relations with the world and therefore to duplicate the conditions of seeing and their 'spontaneous' ideology. Bazin had good reason to write (not without humour): 'Deep focus in William Wyler's film aspires to liberalism and democracy like the consciousness of the American audience and the heroes of the film.'[48]

On the one hand, a duplication of the ideological effects of the impression of reality and the 'normality' of representation based on the specular. On the other hand, *revelation* (in precisely the Christian sense) of the natural ambiguity and unity of the world. No more need be said to demonstrate the passionate idealism with which Bazin's discourse attributes charismatic, world-revealing virtues to deep focus.

The action of 'transparent' reality

It is this which Mitry and then *Cinéthique* have attacked without much difficulty. Let us look for a moment at the arguments of the former. Mitry criticizes the idealist trends in the theory of cinema and stresses certain 'facts' which they both 'overlook' and mask. We might usefully refer to these facts ourselves since the deep focus question and its ideological inscription must inevitably take them into account.

To the 'revelation' (according to Bazin) of the 'immanent ambiguity of reality' by deep focus, Mitry opposes 'the fact that film reality is a mediated reality: between the real world and us there is the film, the camera, a representation, in the extreme case where there is not also an author'.[49]

> It is supremely naive to think (as Bazin does) that because the camera automatically records a real fact, it gives us an objective and impartial[50] image of that reality. . . . By the very fact that it is *given as an image*, the real that is recorded by the lens is structured according to formalizing values which create a series of new relations and therefore a new reality – at the very least a new appear-

> ance. The *represented* is seen via a *representation* of it which necessarily *transforms* it.[51]

This is the basis of his opposition to the whole movement he calls the 'spiritualists' (from Roger Munier to André Bazin, Henri Agel, Eric Rohmer, Amédée Ayfre):[52] 'To consider the film image as an "expression of the real world" because of its objectivity, *taken as an absolute*,[53] and to say that the essence of the film image is "revelatory of the world", is to set up the world as a "being in itself" which (though more "pure") necessarily resembles the object as we know it, without considering that this object is what it is only by virtue of the fact that we perceive it. This is constructing "transcendental realism" . . .'[54]

Mitry's argument, then, is underpinned by the fact that the film image, because *limited* spatially by a frame (the film 'frame') and temporally (by the duration of a shot), is absolutely distinct from 'normal', everyday perception where 'the movement of our eyes and our own movement makes the space around us appear homogeneous and continuous'.[55]

As with Bazin, the notion of the 'frame' thereafter plays a determining role for Mitry. The frame is of course no longer for him the celebrated 'window on the world'. On the contrary: 'The things included in the frame are literally "cut", deprived of any direct relation with the external world. Their relations, hitherto extended in space, are now turned back on themselves, as if the edges of the frame reflected them into the centre like a curved mirror.'[56]

Note that the last passage is an exact, though apparently unconscious, description of the process of monocular perspective; the folding inwards, the convergence in a centre, are precisely what has come to codify and govern perspective. That there is no indication of this here seems symptomatic. What Mitry's argument lacks, and what in spite of everything leads him to agree with Bazin on a fundamental point (see below), is any reference to what it is that reintegrates both vision and the representation produced by the camera lens – inclusive of differences – into one and the same visual system (and into the same ideology). What follows confirms this:

> Consequently, the image records a fragment of space, and the limited and enclosed nature of its representation provides the objects represented with a system of 'determinations' and orientations which they do not possess in their actual reality. This space thus becomes a separate 'whole', and constitutes an autonomous structure; and obviously any cut in this context works in the same way. If one also takes into account the fact that the relative dimensions of the objects recorded in a shot have no real relation to their actual dimensions (since very different fields are represented in a fixed frame), it could be said that each shot is like a "cell', a distinct space which succeeding shots nevertheless reconstitute into a homogeneous space, but one which is *not like* the space from which these elements have been drawn.[57]

The imprecision of the language reflects the theoretical shortcomings here. In the end Mitry is simply observing and empirically describing one of the 'facts' mentioned earlier: that film space is indisputably different from real space, that 'film therefore emerges as a discontinuous space-time development, quite unlike the one-directional continuum of real Space-Time (in our immediate universe at least), although it reflects its continuous scheme.'[58] The whole problem resides in this 'although'. In fact, the formulation should be reversed: *although* different from our perception of 'real' Space-Time, film *appears* to reflect its 'continuous scheme'; although at all points materially discontinuous, it reproduces the illusion of perception which interprets our 'immediate' Space-Time as 'a one-directional continuum'. Mitry firmly insists, in opposition to Bazin, on the film/reality distinction. But what he fails to recognize is how, far from revealing this difference, film tends to reduce it by presenting itself as the equivalent of the norms of perception and continually restoring the illusion of homogeneity and continuity. And this is precisely the basis of that error of Bazin's which leads him to ascribe the same value to the unifying functions of both perception and film representation. (We shall come back to this process of and within discontinuity when we follow Bazin and Mitry in a re-reading of the 'evolution of film language' in terms of the contradictions introduced by deep focus.)

It is therefore inevitable that Mitry should end up sharing Bazin's view. He places the emphasis, against Bazin, on the otherness of film in relation to reality, while failing to recognize the process of suppression of which this otherness is the object, and the place of the spectator in this process. He abstracts film from its place in the social whole into an absolute where the 'truth' of its nature ('fragmentation of the real into shots and sequences') takes precedence over the way it is read (reconstitution, reconstruction). Inevitably therefore, like Bazin (though of course not without shades of difference), he comes to see that because it reduces this 'fragmentation' deep focus does in fact produce 'heightened realism' in two senses: by doing what the classical shot does not – that is, grasping 'the event globally in its real space-time relations' and restoring 'to object and background their density, presence and weight' ('ontological realism');[59] and by placing 'the spectator back into the true conditions of perception', that is, coherence, continuity and finally 'ambiguity' ('psychological realism'). Provided that deep focus does not become an omnivalent and substitutive principle for all other formulas of *mise en scène*, Mitry declares himself 'perfectly in accord with Bazin'.

Gérard Leblanc in *Cinéthique* reveals the same agreement on the realist function of deep focus. For his combined demonstration of the idealism of Welles and the camera, he bases himself on the idealism of Bazin, quoting the latter's definition ('Let us leave it to Bazin to describe deep focus'). 'What', asks Leblanc, 'is the significance of the desire to "create" images which have a reality as substantial as that of the real world? The question is a crucial one for a film which, as Bazin observes, completes the impression of reality as yet imperfectly produced by the "classical camera".'[60] Leblanc thus recuperates Bazin's argument on one point, the point on which (and only on which) Mitry does not oppose Bazin: 'The wide-angle lens offers a field of vision comparable to that of the eye (ceilings were constructed in the studio to make for more realistic interior scenes); and deep focus and the long take strengthen the impression of reality.'[61]

Nothing is less certain than that deep focus – particularly in the films of Welles and Wyler, which since Bazin have become the statutory examples – is responsible for 'heightened realism' in this way. And this is precisely because, as I shall try to show, it inscribes the linear perspective code of representation into the image more successfully than any other method of filming.

We are therefore faced with a contradiction. For Bazin the intervention of deep focus increases the realist coefficient of the cinematic image by completing the virtues (potentials) *already* inscribed in it; in other words by perfecting it (as Leblanc says) and giving literally *more field* to its 'ontological realism'. This cannot be the case for Mitry since it is this kind of 'realism' that he challenges in order to stress the artificiality (otherness) of the film image. Because it produces a 'more global' space and relatively less discontinuity, he concedes to deep focus only that it comes closer to certain effects of ordinary perception, brings back and reinscribes into the image the *conditions* (the psychological conditions at least) of a 'supra-realism'. In the first case the *more* is *added*, in the *second* it tends to cancel a *less*, to fill a lack. Clearly, this contradiction between Bazin and Mitry is also a contradiction in Mitry, since the deep focus image is not a 'special case' excluded as such by the network of specificities and differences which establish the film image as other than the world while presenting itself as its double. Bazin is more consistent in his illusion than Mitry is in exposing it, for, as the case of deep focus illustrates, one cannot make a stand on the constituent differences and the specific codifying processes of the film image without extending the same argument to the *work* of these codifying processes (their justification and their end); this being to produce their own misrecognition, to present themselves as 'natural' and consequently to mask the play of differences.

Taking as our starting-point this *positive* contribution to the impression of reality which both Bazin and Mitry attribute to deep focus, in what follows we shall analyse the *double play* of the codifying process of the film image (its 'transparency', since it is by not being re-marked as an image that it operates);[62] for this double play ensures that the 'extra realism' which deep focus is supposed to produce cannot be produced without distorting and stressing the integral codes of the 'realism' already working 'naturally' in the image. What is the nature of this supplementary contribution, and how precisely does it *exceed* in relation to the system of (perspectival and cultural) norms which ground the impression of reality and sustain the category of 'realism'?

It is not immaterial that arguments which would elsewhere be or claim to be antagonistic come together and back each other up at the point where *deep focus* = *supra-realism*. This is one thing at least that they have in common.

First, Bazin. As we have seen, his interpretation of the action of deep focus was consistent with his system as a whole, since in this case *interpretation* is clearly what is involved (the remainder of this article will seek to demonstrate this by *constructing* deep focus as an object of theory). Our claim will be that Bazin's interpretation of deep focus is a 'fantasy', tautologically confirming the illusion central to his system: that the 'evolution of film language fulfils the cinema's realist destiny', and reinscribes 'the ontological realism of the film image'. Moreover, the coherence here is only gained at the expense of a number of distortions in the argument which, when we come to them, we shall read as *signs of contradiction*. The effect of these contradictions is to undermine Bazin's argument and at the same time to produce its reverse, its other aspect, hence to subvert it. Clearly such subversion only comes into play when the argument so affected (which also sets up the preconditions for subversion) demonstrates some theoretical force. This applies to Bazin's argument. And that is why Lebel[63] is misguided in his attempt to stamp *Cahiers* with some indelible realist mark by repeatedly insisting on a direct relationship between our present work and that of 'father' Bazin; he would also be mistaken to depend on the effectiveness of such a reductive argument ('by reversing Bazin's idealist problematic' *Cahiers* remains 'a party to' that problematic and in some sense an offshoot of its idealism . . .). As Lenin said, intelligent idealism is more intelligent than stupid materialism . . .

Then Mitry. The critique he offers of Bazin's idealist assumptions and conclusions is based on the radical difference between the object of film and the 'real' object of perception (space as produced by film being other than the spatio-temporal continuum produced by perception). But this principle, which governs the whole of his argument, contains a distortion, since despite everything Mitry aligns himself with Bazin's interpretation of deep focus. The resulting weakness in his argument we see as the mark of a fundamental deficiency, a failure to take into account *the place of the viewer* in the film process. While the difference between film and reality belongs in the category of knowledge, and is even one of the first generalities of any theory of cinema, it is nonetheless invariably the site of a *denial* that masks this difference. This denial is linked both to the status of the analytical subject and to the socio-historical inscription of the cinema, hence to the 'subject of ideology' (in the terminology of Julia Kristeva).[64] Its effect is both to conceal and to point up the *conflict* between the signifying process in film in its materiality, and those ideological resistances which obstruct the reading of this signifying materiality and the constitution of the film as text. It is within this conflict that what Bazin calls 'the evolution of film language' comes into play, a process which we would prefer to describe as follows: the production of film signifiers as 'formations of compromise' between the pressure of ideology and the pressure of the text. (Where Bazin posits a linear progression and a chronological, homogeneous, continuous chain of 'forms' and 'styles', we see film signifiers produced by multiple and unequal determinants and integrated into the social whole in a complex way.) In other words, Mitry's argument lacks both one of the terms of the contradiction and an awareness of the contradiction itself. He gives his attention to the 'effects of form', and to the otherness and specificity of film signifiers. He is aware that film cannot be reduced to any 'transparency' to or transcendence by the 'real' (that it is not simply governed by the order of the referents). But the question of 'realism' can only be an embarrassment to him *since cinematic 'realism' is only produced as such by being produced as a denial of the 'reality of film'.* All he can call up in opposition to such 'realism' (and to Bazin) is a *formalism,* whose phenomenological foundations, judging from the critique they produce, are not opposed to Bazin's idealism. The fact that this formalism is at the last moment given the task of abolishing or reducing the problem of realism as 'deceptive' explains why, having been abolished on false premises, the problem crops up again here and there in Mitry's work. This is notably the case on the deep focus question, since Mitry has no hesitation in endorsing Bazin's argument on condition that deep focus is reduced to one formal process among others; in other words, recuperated into his own formalist discourse.

Finally, Leblanc, of whom the least one can say is that he has not put himself out to construct his own notion of deep focus. Instead, he hastily takes up from an equally hasty reading of Bazin[65] what suits his argument but is also thereby inevitably ready and waiting for it. It is certainly not Bazin's view that should be used as a final proof of the inherent idealism of the cinema. The symptom constituted by Bazin's work is not *ipso facto* an index of the truth. As we have seen, it points not to some 'truth' about cinema, but to the truth of a conflict of which it is one of the terms in play. This argument, while aimed at the 'essence' of cinema, is not itself a-historical – the moment and place in which it was produced is not without significance. No reading of Bazin is possible which does not take account of his ideological place, the combination of factors which acted on him, and the insertion and effect of his discourse in the field of cinematic practice. (Bazin's theories have established a number of trends and styles as 'models', and their condemnation of montage as 'manipulation' has influenced, and still influences, the practice of a number of film-makers.) For instance, his stress on deep focus and the long take came as a reaction (a response) to Italian neo-realism. In other words, he based himself on a particular moment in the cinema, then the most recent, to which he gave a privileged status and which he postulated as a point of 'progress'. From this vantage point he then retraced the 'course' of the history of the cinema, projecting back on to it the features of the neo-realist movement which thus became finalities endowed with a distinguished genealogy (not without its twists and distortions which we will need to note, including the mobilizing of Stroheim into the ranks of the realists). This retrospective gesture inscribed the history of cinema as teleological (directed towards 'supra-realism'). Clearly, therefore, all Bazin's notations refer back metonymically to his system as a whole, and to adopt his deep focus definition as such (without questioning, still less transforming it) simply implies more or less sharing the *view* of the history of cinema programmed into it: a 'history' that is linear (even if conflicting), autonomous and flowing, moving towards a specific end which would be the assumption of its 'truth', with an 'internal necessity' of progress linking and perfecting cinematic forms, etc. To say, as Leblanc does, without questioning it further, that 'deep focus completes the impression of reality as yet imperfectly produced by the "classical camera" ' is to underwrite the idealist (teleological) model of history which Bazin subscribed to, not surprisingly. But Leblanc?

For 'the history of cinema' is not a given; it has yet to be constructed.

Towards a materialist history of the cinema

At this point a question raised earlier[66] becomes more crucial and determining. What earns deep focus its pivotal place in Bazin's argument is that – independently even of the 'truth' of its nature – it is made the instrument (grid) for a re-reading and reformulation of the 'evolution of cinematic language';[67] and that it thereby reveals a 'meaning' which subtly programmes the entire history of the cinema. This is why the question of what is understood by 'the history of cinema', and what ought to be understood under that heading, is raised more acutely. It is a question which no film theorist or historian has taken the trouble to formulate properly; all have more or less contented themselves with the 'obvious' current (ideological) concept of history as a cumulative series of facts and works, a chronological list of objects 'already there'. This is the same concept constantly reactivated by 'the empiricist ideology which dominates, with a few exceptions, all varieties of history (whether they be history in the broadest sense, or specialized economic, social, political histories, histories of art, literature, philosophy, science, etc.)'.[68] As a concept it amounts to hardly more than arrangement and rearrangement, pottering about with a *given* whose status is never questioned. For the film historian like the rest, it is the empirical fact which rules: dates, films, 'styles', countries, 'influences', ready-made relations to so-called historical events, themselves already there, etc. In other words, a very simple, elementary system of *direct causal links* which is above all convenient in that it confirms the illusion of a homogeneous, complete and continuous historical time, resolves as far as possible the complex play of unequal determinants, condenses the relationships of different temporalities, and smoothes away differences.[69] A 'concrete', 'historical' base thus falls effortlessly into place. For Bazin, for instance, it sanctions his outline of the 'evolution of cinematic language'. Lebel too, 'in support of a materialist reading of the cinema', uses it to evoke 'the history of cinematic forms', and even 'the historical development of forms'.[70] If what specifically separates us from Bazin is the opposition of materialism to idealism, this should be reflected not just in terms of the aesthetics and the theory of cinema, but principally in terms of the question of history (the history of the cinema) itself – its construction and its conception. There is certainly little scope for an argument which simply 'corrects' Bazin's errors, which attacks his presuppositions and his conclusions but uses the same concept of history to do so, thus reasserting unchanged the object, if not the modes, of his discourse. The object *cinema* and the object *history of cinema* are not the same for Bazin and ourselves; nor, it seems, for Lebel and ourselves, since he has not troubled to provide a theoretical base for his object ('Cinema and Ideology': well and good, but what is the value of an analysis of this relationship if neither of the terms posited is established theoretically?).[71] Lebel is in the position of having no object other than the one that is obvious to the empiricist, and which is also postulated by the empiricist idealism of Bazin.

Our projected study of the variations and 'utilizations' of deep focus in particular films can only deconstruct Bazin's interpretations if it is based on a concept of history radically different from his. Different, that is to say, from the one established by existing 'histories of cinema' generally: the concept which postulates linear causality; claims autonomy on the basis of both the 'specificity' of the cinema and the models provided by idealist histories of 'art'; promotes a teleological view of history; and advances a notion of 'progress' or gradual 'perfection' not just of techniques, but of 'forms' as well. What this means, briefly, is the identification, covering up and submersion of cinematic practice in the general mass of films made and seen as given, finished, concrete entities, in other words the 'works' of the cinema which, even if they vary in 'quality', all have an equal *right* to found and write its history.

The task also demands that we first establish the complex status of deep focus theoretically, which means formulating the question of the *history* of what, prior to analysis, is presented as no more than a 'simple technical-stylistic process', unevenly 'present' and 'given' in films as a whole and in the text of each individual film. Through analysis it is exposed and worked through – transformed – on two fronts. One is that of its appearance and disappearance in the history of the cinema; that is, the way that deep focus participates in one or more signifying systems and how it is related to the network of determinants which produce these systems. The other is that of the modes, conditions and laws governing the way that deep focus inscribes into film codes which are 'not specifically' cinematic (photographic, pictorial, theatrical), whose varying impregnation of film is also subject to a history and operates like the history of cinema. An examination of the convergences and divergences, breaks and reinforcements which mark and effect this inscription of deep focus into a history that extends beyond the boundaries of cinema to take in systems of representation as a whole and to establish the cinema itself as a system of representation (it is only on this basis that a materialist theory of the cinema and a history of the cinema as other than a series of films can be envisaged) – such an examination will enable us to formulate some answers to the questions posed by Norbert Massa in *Ciné-Forum*.[72] I quote at length from his 'Note on the history of cinema' to show that we are not alone in sensing the urgency of the problem.

> There is as yet no history of the cinema. All the history books (cf. Brasillach, Ford, but also Sadoul and Mitry) start from the simple idea that history is what is past, that the cinema has a past and therefore a history, and that the historian who is of course 'of his time' must pore over that past with the maximum objectivity.
>
> Objectivity here means as far as possible eliminating subjective distortions, and not setting up an object that would be the authentic object of a science – the history of the cinema.
>
> But a scientific history of the cinema is not the rediscovery, restitution, or even reconstitution of a past, not even when this goes beyond simple description to engage in explanation.
>
> To deal with the history of cinema properly speaking means constituting that history. Histories of the cinema lack both history and the cinema, since for their authors both are already there. Everything happens as if the cinema were visibly present in a mass of films and it was just a question of going and looking at it. This ideology of historical time as linear, directed, teleological – a concept of time which hinges on the automatic presence of the essence of cinema in its works – has to be replaced by a scientific history which will have first determined its object. The object 'Cinema' and the object of a history of the cinema have to be considered at the same time. Only a theory of the cinema as a signifying practice, it seems to us, is capable of responding to the demands of an authentic history of the cinema.
>
> In other words, the constitution of a history of the cinema demands the determination of the historical moment when the cinematic *text* is doubled by a form which designates it as such. This is the first stress mark in that history and, for theory, the point of no return for history as a science in relation to the ideology of history.
>
> The determination of the cinematic text (i.e. its 'reading') at this nodal point in the history in which it is inscribed (necessarily, like every text, like everything) and where it *writes history* makes it possible for the cinema's past to be taken up again and re-read as history: that is, rewritten as history. . . .
>
> A materialist history of cinema will need to be highly critical, recursive that is, and to constitute the past from the main lines of the present. It will also be monumental. Far from any tendency to even things out, it will trace its course along the crest-lines which will also be the lines of greatest tension in the writing.
>
> A materialist history of the cinema, while conscious of the specificity of cinema, will only consider it in its relative autonomy, in relation to other practices. It will therefore also need to determine the specificity of these relations.

The emphasis on the future in these paragraphs restates the lack of any such materialist history of the cinema today, and its necessity. It is still to be achieved, and cannot be achieved without the concept of a *signifying practice*[73] (which is why it is pointless to look for any expression or even suggestion of it in Lebel, despite the materialist ring of a number of his chapter headings). It is also impossible without the Althusserian concept of *differential historical temporalities*;[74] that is, without a materialist theory of history itself, and that is, once again, without or outside a Marxist elaboration of the science of history – historical materialism.

Translated by Diana Matias

Notes

1 This selection represents the first two parts (of six) of this article. The other parts are: 'Pour la première fois' (*Cahiers* 231); 'La profondeur de champ primitive' (*Cahiers* 233); 'Effacement de la profondeur/avènement de la parole' (*Cahiers* 234–5); 'Quelle parole?' (*Cahiers* 241). A summary statement of the main lines of the text can be found in Comolli's 'Machines of the Visible' in Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (eds), *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 3rd ed., New York, Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 741–60. For an overview of the positions of Baudry, Oudart and Comolli on the relations between technique and ideology, see James Spellerberg, 'Technology and Ideology in the Cinema' in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, pp. 761–75. For a discussion of these issues see the debate between Noël Carroll and Stephen Heath in *October*: Carroll, 'Address to the Heathen', *October* 23, Winter 1982; Heath, 'Le Père Noël', *October* 26, Fall 1983; Carroll, 'A Reply to Heath', *October* 27, Winter 1983.

2 In *La Nouvelle Critique*, nos. 34, 35, 37 and 41. Reference should of course be made to the whole of this study, published [1971] by Editions Sociales; but my discussion is limited to particular arguments from the first part (no. 34). (Author's note.)

3 'Cinéma et Idéologie', *Nouvelle Critique* 34, p. 70. (Author's note.)

4 Ibid., p. 71 (Author's note.)

5 Cf. *Cinéthique*, no. 3, 'Economique, Idéologique, Formel', discussion with Marcelin Pleynet and Jean Thibaudeau; various issues of *Cinéthique*, particularly no. 5, 'Direction' (Gérard Leblanc), 'La parenthèse et le détour' (Jean-Paul Fargier); 'Notes sur l'appareil de base' (Jean-Louis Baudry, 7/8 [trans. as 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus' in Bill Nichols (ed.), *Movies and Methods*, II, pp. 531–42]), as well as the long collective article in no. 9, pp. 51–9; nos. 216 and 217 of *Cahiers* ('Cinema/Idéologie/Critique' [Ch. 3 in this volume]); 'Travail, lecture, jouissance' (Serge Daney and Jean-Pierre Oudart, *Cahiers* 222 [Ch. 7 in this volume]), 'Film/politique' (Pascal Bonitzer, *Cahiers* 222), 'La vicariance du pouvoir' (Jean Narboni, *Cahiers* 224 [Ch. 10 in this volume]); and 'La suture' (Jean-Pierre Oudart, *Cahiers* 211 and 212 [Ch. 2 in this volume]), 'Le concept de montage' (Jacques Aumont, *Cahiers* 211), 'Montage' (Jean Narboni, Sylvie Pierre, Jacques Rivette, *Cahiers* 210 [Ch. 1 in this volume]); 'Le détour par le direct' (J.-L. Comolli, *Cahiers* 209 and 211), 'L'effet de réel' (Jean-Pierre Oudart, *Cahiers* 228 [Ch. 14 in this volume]). (Author's note.)

6 *Cinéthique*, no. 3, p. 10. (Author's note.)
7 Cf. especially *Peinture et Société*, Idées-Arts, Gallimard. (Author's note.)
8 *Cinéthique* 7/8. (Author's note.)
9 Where Lebel criticizes the positions of Pleynel, those of *Cinéthique*, and our own. (Author's note.)
10 *Nouvelle Critique*, no. 34, p. 68. (Author's note.)
11 Ibid., p. 72 (Author's note.)
12 'Sur Salador', in 'Travail, lecture, jouissance', *Cahiers* 222 [Ch. 7 in this volume]. (Author's note.)
13 In fact Volume I of *L'Histoire comparée du cinéma* by Jacques Deslandes (Casterman), which covers the period 1826–96, completes (and in some cases corrects) the works of Georges Sadoul. It has the particular merit of quoting the statements of inventors, the texts of patent applications, etc., thereby unfolding an interesting ideological panorama. (Author's note.)
14 'Le mythe du cinéma total', in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, I, p. 25, Editions du Cerf. (Author's note.)
15 Note, on the other hand, that in his 'Ontologie de l'image cinématographique' (*Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, I), Bazin links *representation* to death and particularly to the Egyptian practice of embalming. Current research by Jean-Louis Schefer also posits this connection, though from quite different theoretical assumptions. (Author's note.)
16 See below. (Author's note.)
17 Bazin, 'Le mythe du cinéma total', pp. 21–2. (Author's note.)
18 Gérard Leblanc, in 'Welles, Bazin et la RKO', *Cinéthique*, no. 6, p. 30. Part II of my study criticizes certain positions taken in this article. (Author's note.)
19 Lebel, 'Cinéma et Idéologie', p. 71. (Author's note.)
20 Ibid. (Author's note.)
21 It is relevant that the word *prospectiva*, or *perspectiva*, in medieval Latin designates the science of optics itself (cf. the treatise on optics by John Peckham (d. 1292) entitled 'Perspectiva'). After the works of Alberti, which provide a mathematical and geometrical foundation for perspective, painters and theoreticians of the Quattrocento and the Cinquecento made a distinction between *perspectiva* (or *prospectiva*) *communis* or *naturalis*, which seems to have designated both the science of sight and the act of seeing itself ('things fixed by a particular angle of vision', Schefer), and *artificialis* which 'conversely, establishes Alberti's geometrical perspective, allowing accurate constructions to be made' (Schefer). (Author's note.)
22 Quoted by André Vigneau in *Une brève histoire de l'art de Niepce à nos jours*, Laffont, p. 63. (Author's note.)
23 Quoted by Deslandes, op. cit. (note 13), pp. 63, 65. (Author's note.)
24 Cf., on the 'backwardness' of photochemistry and the theory of the physics of light in relation to the practice of photography, *La science de la photographie*, Gérard de Vaucouleurs (Elzévir): 'We have had to wait until very recently for the appearance of a coherent theoretical explanation of the subtle and mysterious mechanism of the action of light on a light-sensitive surface, an explanation which had been vainly sought for a century. This is because the mechanism activates extremely complex phenomena involving the intervention of elementary particles – ions, electrons, photons – which can only be interpreted by the most up-to-date theories of matter and light.' (Author's note.)
25 In *Léonard de Vinci, la peinture*, texts collected and translated by André Chastel

(Hermann), p. 172. For Leonardo, even more than for Alberti, the eye of the observer is the criterion of the truth of what is represented: we know that Leonardo came to criticize Alberti's linear perspective because, confronted with a painting composed in accordance with the laws of perspective, the eye of the spectator could only see this flat surface, without any kind of distortion, from a certain prescribed distance – a distortion of the lateral parts of the canvas occurring as the eye drew nearer the centre of the painting. (Author's note.)

26 Here is the programme of a conference in London in 1881, quoted by Deslandes (op. cit. (note 13), p. 247): 'The propagation of light; light waves, concave and convex mirrors; Darker's Kaleidoscope; refraction; the light spectrum; mirages; diffraction; interference; Newton's rings; the irridescence of pearls, feathers and soap bubbles; chromatic and monochromatic light; the persistence of light on the retina; the Thaumotrope; the Kalotrope; the Photodrome; Bayle's Choreutoscope.' (Author's note.)

27 See below. (Author's note.)

28 Deslandes, op. cit., p. 141. (Author's note.)

29 Quoted by Deslandes, op. cit., p. 143. (Author's note.)

30 Quoted by Deslandes, op. cit., p. 144. (Author's note.)

31 Deslandes, op. cit., p. 130. (Author's note.)

32 Quoted by Deslandes, op. cit., p. 144. It should also be noted that another scientist, Albert Londe, who was appointed by Charcot to run the medical photography laboratory at La Salpêtrière, perfected some chronophotographic apparatus but, like Marey, stated that the Cinematograph was of no interest from a scientific point of view, 'the cinematographic representation placing the observer in precisely the same situation as he is in front of the model itself.' However, Londe emphasized that it would be very different if the Cinematograph were *slowed down* or *speeded up*: 'By slowing down the speed of the synthetic apparatus one can make visible to the eye movements which normally escape it. . . . Conversely, the eye misses some movements because of their extreme slowness, for example the growth of animals and plants. By taking a series of photographs at appropriately spaced intervals, one can then view them at speed and reproduce in a moment the phenomenon in its entirety.' Here we have foreshadowed one of the pivotal points in the development of *scientific cinema*, and it is worth noting that it was a 'trick' – a falsification of the impression of reality – which first registered this point. It is not enough, as Lebel puts it, to 'perch a camera on a microscope . . . to film what happens between one plate and another' in order to make a scientific film in such a way that 'the result obtained has nothing to do with "ideology" . . .' Filming microscopic images involves, once again, breaking with the normal 'realist' frequency. (Author's note.)

33 Cf. André Bazin, 'Le mythe du cinéma total', in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, I, p. 22. (Author's note.)

34 Deslandes, op. cit., pp. 213, 214. (Author's note.)

35 Quoted by Deslandes, op. cit., p. 213. (Author's note.)

36 Cf. André Bazin: 'depth of field is not a mode of camerawork like the use of a light-diffusing screen or a particular style of lighting, but a major acquisition for *mise en scène*, a dialectical advance in the history of cinematic language.' ('L'évolution du langage cinématographique', in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, I, p. 143.) (Author's note.)

37 It is of course possible to obtain depth of field with lenses of 'normal' focal length, but this means stopping down the lens considerably, which requires either sunlight in exterior shots or, in the studio, powerful lighting or very sensitive film. (Author's note.)
38 Notably, 'L'évolution du langage cinématographique' and 'William Wyler ou le janséniste de la mise en scène', in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, I. (Author's note.)
39 My emphases throughout this quotation. (Author's note.)
40 'L'évolution du langage cinématographique', pp. 141–4. (Author's note.)
41 Ibid., p. 145. (Author's note.)
42 Ibid., p. 146. (Author's note.)
43 Ibid., p. 146. (Author's note.)
44 Ibid., p. 146. (Author's note.)
45 Ibid., p. 148. (Author's note.)
46 'William Wyler . . .', p. 158. (Author's note.)
47 Ibid., p. 159. (Author's note.)
48 Ibid., p. 160. The film is *The Best Years of Our Lives*. (Author's note.)
49 *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, II, 'Les Formes', Editions Universitaires, p. 12. (Author's note.)
50 Note in this passage a critique of Lebel's arguments before they were even formulated (1965). (Author's note.)
51 Mitry, op. cit., p. 11. (Author's note.)
52 Roger Munier in an article, 'L'image fascinante' (*Diogène*, no. 61); Henri Agel and Amédée Ayfre in their books on the cinema; Eric Rohmer in his articles in *Cahiers*. (Author's note.)
53 See note 50. (Author's note.)
54 *Esthetique et psychologie du cinéma*, I, 'Les Structures', p. 129. (Author's note.)
55 Mitry, op. cit., II, p. 10. (Author's note.)
56 Ibid., p. 10. (Author's note.)
57 Ibid. (Author's note.)
58 Ibid. (Author's note.)
59 Bazin's formulas, here taken over by Mitry. (Author's note.)
60 'Welles, Bazin et la RKO' in *Cinéthique*, no. 6, p. 30. (Author's note.)
61 Ibid., p. 32. (Author's note.)
62 It is interesting to note that the 'theories' on the 'transparency' of the *mise en scène* derive in a rather unconscious way from this 'transparency' of the codifying process in the film image. (Author's note.)
63 The articles which appeared in *La Nouvelle Critique* (the first of which was referred to frequently in the first part of this text) are now collected in a single volume, together with additional previously unpublished material: *Cinéma et Idéologie*, Editions Sociales. The argument presented there, it must be said, is muddled and confused, rooted in the 'golden mean' and 'common sense'; for want of any historical materialism or dialectic, it proceeds empirically, wholly blind to the ideology it expresses. It is precisely this ideology which we are trying to pin down here, and which is, with its positivism and objectivism, the discourse of technicians (the object of our concern in part III of this text). (Author's note.)
64 In 'Pratique analytique, pratique révolutionnaire' (*Cinéthique* 9/10), Kristeva distinguishes the *subject of the text*, the *subject of the ideology*, and the *subject of science*. 'The "subject" of the text is conscious of psychosis (which is characterized by the foreclosure of the subject and the real) but emerges from it and

masters it in a practice which is only *social*. To the extent that this practice is a practice of the *signifier*, the subject of the text is also distinguished from the subject of *science* which we were able to define as foreclosed (of the psychotic type) in the sense that, within its metalinguistic practice, its submission to the signifier is lacking. It also differs from the subject of the *ideology*, whose misrecognition-recognition is situated in the imaginary of the 'I' and is structured like a transference neurosis.' (Author's note.)

65 The critique of idealism cannot be 'hasty': because the idealist discourse is always dominant in the field of cinema (among others), a hurried repudiation in principle or a simple rejection of it is not enough. (Author's note.)

66 Cf. *Cahiers* 229 [p. 230 here]: 'the theoretical approach itself installs contradiction as the driving principle of the history of the cinema. . . . We in turn will need to look at Bazin's account of "the evolution of cinematic language" . . . to retrace or extend his arguments in the direction of those technical, aesthetic, *or* ideological/economic factors which produce the "evolution" in question, for Bazin tries to establish an autonomous history of cinematic forms'. (Author's note.)

67 It is in this extremely important work that Bazin attempts to apply his system to the history of cinema itself, putting forward a reading (interpretative and tendentious) which persists in seeing that history as a progressive – though of course contradictory and uneven – accumulation of techniques and styles moving inevitably towards a cinema in which the 'real' is automatically present in all its 'mystery'. It is precisely this notion of 'the evolution of cinematic language' that permeates not just Bazin's work, but that of most historians of the cinema, not least Lebel. Such an 'evolution' proceeds in fact from a fixed, non-dialectical viewpoint, which holds on the one hand a notion of time as linear and complete (cf. note 69), and on the other hand only considers films as *finished* products, literally passed by, and emptied of the practice which not only makes them, but outside whose operation they cannot be read (films as envelopes, shells, sediments, fossils). The ideological theme of cinema as an accumulation of films where the most recent is the most modern (the latest material) needs therefore to be regarded with suspicion. Regrettably, it is a theme found in Lebel's work. (Author's note.)

68 Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital*, New Left Books, p. 108. (Author's note.)

69 'It is only possible to give a content to the concept of historical time by defining historical time as the specific form of existence in which different structural levels of temporality interfere, because of the particular relations of correspondence, non-correspondence, articulation, dislocation and torsion which obtain between the different "levels" of the whole in accordance with its general structure.' Althusser, *Reading Capital*, p. 108. (Author's note.)

70 *Cinéma et Idéologie*, p. 199. I shall quote the passage, a fine example of conceptual and scriptural indecision: 'At a precise stage in the history of cinematic forms a particular form can momentarily crystallize in itself given ideological signifieds, which explains as reaction the rejection of these forms and the valorization of other processes or forms; and these, "used" or invested by ideological signifieds in their turn, will be rejected in favour of new forms, or replaced by the return of forms rejected earlier and now "cleansed", ideologically speaking, by the passage of history.' (Author's note.)

71 Lebel's book is riddled with the shortcomings of such a theoretical elaboration: what 'cinema' and what 'ideology' are in question if not the commonplace

notions whose 'obviousness' absolves them of the need for theoretical definition? To justify this lack, Lebel bases himself on the fact that Marxist theoretical research on the notion of ideology is as yet far from complete (but does it have to be?). This is a useful expedient, allowing Lebel to avoid taking up a position on any particular direction of this research, to put off theory until tomorrow, and to slide over the minimum of conceptual work which any Marxist development of the appropriation of the real by knowledge could not evade without renouncing its Marxist character. As for ourselves, we do not intend to dodge the issue, the entire third part of this text being devoted to it, and which will deal precisely with those areas indicated by our title, 'Technique and Ideology': the technical ideology, the discourse of technicians, and the ideological status of cinematic technique. Furthermore, Lebel's non-definition of the objects whose relations he claims to deal with leads him to describe them – in contradiction to his own project – as more or less parallel and not articulated within the same process: on the one hand films, on the other ideology, which 'comes to them' stage by stage, and which the director – a regular station-master – directs and shunts around well or badly according to his skill; outside and pre-existing the intervention of ideology (which no doubt awaits a suitable moment to show its cards) there is always a section of the film ready, waiting to offer itself up to ideology or to defend itself against it . . . The film/ideology relationship thus becomes a chronological sequence whose naive schema cannot fail to remind us of Marx's remarks on Proudhon's schema: 'The production relations of every society form a whole. M. Proudhon considers economic relations as so many social phases engendering one another, one resulting from the other like the antithesis from the thesis, and realizing in their logical sequence the impersonal reason of humanity. The only drawback to this method is that when he comes to examine a single one of these phases, M. Proudhon cannot explain it without having recourse to all the other relations of society, which relations, however, he has not yet made his dialectic movement engender. When, after that, M. Proudhon, by means of pure reason, proceeds to give birth to these other phases, he treats them as if they were newborn babes. He forgets that they are of the same age as the first. How could the single logical formula of movement, of sequence, of time, explain the body of society, in which all economic relations co-exist simultaneously and support one another?' (*The Poverty of Philosophy*). (Author's note.)

72 A journal published at Poitiers by the animation group of the Ciné-Club (Marc Farina, Jean-Paul François, Norbert Massa, Jean-François Pichard, Jean-Noël Rey) which has just published its fifth number. (Author's note.)

73 'Situated in historical materialism and *at the same time* in dialectical materialism, the concept of signifying practice illuminates the fact that all social practice with an ideological function is signifying, that the conditions of signification are the social conditions, and, inversely, the social (ideological) conditions and functions have as their *other aspect* the production of meaning. Thus historical materialism is opened up to what it excludes when it becomes dogma, namely dialectical logic. In this perspective, to consider the 'arts' for example as *signifying practices* is, it seems to me, the only way which allows them to be envisaged as socio-historical formations while designating the specificity of the operation of meaning and subject in them, without reducing them to ideology, but equally without alienating them as subjective pathological experiences

(locations of schizophrenicization) or aesthetic experiences (locations of the purely imaginary and of narcissistic pleasure). The 'arts'-as-signifying-practices means that they are *also* all that, but other things as well: locations of historical contradiction, participations in social history.' Julia Kristeva, 'Pratique analytique, pratique révolutionnaire'. (Author's note.)

74 'The model of a *continuous and homogeneous* time which takes the place of immediate existence, which is the place of the immediate existence of this continuing presence, can no longer be regarded as the time of history. . . . We can argue from the specific structure of the Marxist whole (the organic whole made hierarchical) that it is no longer possible to consider the process of the development of the different levels of the whole *in the same historical time*. . . . Each of these particular histories (modes of production, relations of production, political superstructure, aesthetic productions, etc.) is punctuated by its own rhythms and can only be known on condition that we have defined the *concept* of the specificity of its historical temporality and its punctuations (continuous development, revolutions, breaks, etc.). . . . The specificity of these times is therefore *differential*, since it is based on the differential relations between the different levels within the whole. . . . In the capitalist mode of production, therefore, the time of economic production (for example) has absolutely nothing to do with the obviousness of everyday practice's ideological time. . . . It is an invisible time, essentially illegible, as invisible and as opaque as the reality of the total capitalist production process itself. . . . [The construction of this concept of history] has nothing to do with the visible sequence of events recorded by the chronicler. . . . there is nothing in true history which allows it to be read in the ideological continuum of a linear time that need only be punctuated and divided; on the contrary, it has its own extremely complex temporality which is, of course, utterly paradoxical in comparison with the disarming simplicity of ideological pre-judgement. . . . The presence of one level is, so to speak, the absence of another, and this coexistence of a 'presence' and of absences is simply the effect of the structure of the whole in its articulated decentricity. . . . We would be falling back into the ideology of time as continuous-homogeneous/contemporary of itself, if we were to relate to this one and the same time, as so many discontinuities of its continuity, the different temporalities in question, and to regard them as retrogressions and progressions, survivals or inequalities of development attributable to this time. . . . On the contrary, we must regard these differences in temporal structure as, *and only as*, so many objective indices of the mode of articulation of the different elements or structures in the general structure of the whole. . . . To speak of differential historical temporality therefore absolutely obliges us to situate *this site* and to consider, in its particular articulation, the *function* of such an element or such a level in the current configuration of the whole.' (*Reading Capital*, pp. 99–106.) (Author's note.)

17 Pascal Bonitzer: ' "Reality" of Denotation'

(' "Réalité" de la dénotation', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 229, May-June 1971)

> The operation which restores the third dimension in the 'camera obscura' occurs by means of an apparatus (a mechanism) which (1) produces results, and (2) vanishes from its product. Its product must then be read by way of a machine other than the dioptric or camera obscura: it can only indeed be read on a machine *which is not* the camera obscura.
>
> Jean-Louis Schefer

As we know, the cinema was contrived, scientifically *and* ideologically, on the figurative system elaborated following the symbolic alteration of the Renaissance, a figurative system closed off and deconstructed at the end of the nineteenth century. The ideological apparatus of the cinema was caught up in this historical closure and was produced as an appendage, an extension (a prolongation) of this system; it gradually became a machine for the manufacturing of fictions and concomitantly a large-scale industry, and after a delay of some years it too experiences the repercussions of the symbolic revolution taking place in the plastic arts.

Filmic figuration should not be considered a prisoner of the scenographic cube of the Renaissance, even though it is (at least in terms of its photogrammetric basis) largely an offshoot of that system. We can perhaps think of the moving camera as an improvement on the imaginary freedom lavished by the screen-mirror on the ocular subject (on the spectator – cf. J.-L. Baudry, 'Ideological effects produced by the basic apparatus', *Cinéthique* 7/8), and as an extension of the perspectival scene, thanks to film's diachrony. In contrast is an invention like the close-up, for example, which, in the economy of montage, inaugurates a plastic discontinuity that irreversibly fractures the *imaginary cube*. This is so even though the cinema's 'narrative' economy has set up strict limits for the use of the close-up, and has reinvested it in the perspectival scene as an instrument of descriptive or dramatic time.

The very notion of a close-up can nevertheless be used to demonstrate the dominance in cinema of the classic scenographic model and its related ideology. Like the other technical classifications regarding the scale of the shot (which have never been questioned in ideological terms), the notion depends on a metaphysical ordering from the part to the whole[1] – with the 'human body', considered on the specular model of the Renaissance, as the middle, the centre, the hinge, and the juridical authority for the separation of the physical 'whole' from its parts, the diagonal support of the whole: cf. the Leonardo da Vinci drawing which is now the emblem for the Manpower agency.

The definition of 'close-up', not completely independently of its role in cinematic practice (in the films of Eisenstein, or Godard), thus raises the following theoretical question: what is the status of the *fragment*? A question which is not, one suspects, limited to a few elements of cinematic practice but concerns filmic space in general. With the destruction and loss of the scenographic hierarchy which *a priori* defined the scale of shots as a function of a normative (anthropocentric) model, an imaginary topological centring, the 'fragment' can no longer be situated in an ideolocial (and properly speaking theological) 'whole'. It marks by its lack all the theoretical units of articulation in film.

Take the shot as an example. What is the pertinence of a shot as a theoretical unit of articulation? This question was posed several years ago (cf. Mitry, *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*, I, p. 156) in terms of the long take. Mitry rejected the idea of the long take and suggested that such a 'shot' is in fact a continuous take composed of *several* shots, each defined by a camera movement. The 'long take' was therefore rejected in the name of a normative classification of shot sizes. Metz has taken up and refined this point of view. But what if this classification is challenged as deriving from ideological arbitraries?

Obviously one cannot erase at a stroke a system of differences without which a film could not be read, let alone made. (We know that the question of depth of field has already considerably complicated this question. I refer you on this point to the article by Jean-Louis Comolli in this issue.)[2] It is necessary, however, to indicate its ideological overdetermination, its historical model.

A film is not a whole of which the shot is a part, because the object 'film' must be established theoretically, unless one resorts to an empirical conception whose repercussions in the area of film criticism are already known. And 'film' can only be constituted theoretically (semiotically) as a closed totality, as a whole, 'since there is no whole. And since there is no whole, nothing is whole' (Lacan, *Scilicet* 2/3), which means that film can now only be considered within the fracture of its defining units: the sequence, the shot, the motif, the syntagma, the frame . . . That is, in terms of its fragmentation and its fragments. The semiotic move was initiated by Roland Barthes ('the frame . . . is not a sliver removed chemically from the substance of the film, but rather the trace of a higher *distribution* of characteristics in which the lived, flowing, animated film is in sum just one text among others. The frame is therefore the fragment of a second text *whose existence never exceeds the fragment*; film and frame meet again in a relationship of palimpsest, so that one cannot say which is the *upper part* of the other or which is *extracted* from which.') The frame and Eisenstein are the point of departure, then, and not coincidentally.

Barthes takes the very notion of 'fragment' from a text by Eisenstein ('Non-indifferent nature', *Cahiers* 218). In 'audio-visual montage' the 'centre of gravity' (= the dialectical motor of the fiction) is no longer defined, as it was in the silent film, by 'the collision of fragments' but rather by 'the stress on the interior of the fragment' (= the effect of collision or of disconnection 'within the shot', 'among the elements included in the image itself'). In other words, it is the dynamic (the dialectics) of montage which lay the foundations for the 'fragment' as such and *at the same time* exceed it or re-fragment it in the production of effects of meaning. In Eisenstein's work, coming through this notion of fragment, there is a first approximation of signification [*signifiance*], of the text as excess to the representation ('Dialectics without simple units: the function of the heterogeneous blocks of signifiers is henceforth to render readable their impeded density, the junctures and disjunctures which annul and multiply them. This process, which parallels that imposed by the unconscious, requires – as do all critical historical phases – a testing, a breakdown into fragments, a re-evaluation of differentiated signifieds.' – Philippe Sollers, 'La boca obra', *Tel Quel* 43).

Eisenstein's thought, in general, leads in the direction of a fracturing of the representative scene, in particular a fracturing of the Western scenographic cube. For example, in 'Beyond the Shot' (*Cahiers* 215): 'One method of teaching drawing in Japanese schools is in that respect cinematic. Our method of teaching drawing: you take an ordinary Russian sheet of rectangular paper. And you cram it, usually without even allowing for the margins (the edges get greasy from our labours!), with a boring caryatid, a pompous Corinthian capital or a plaster Dante. . . . The Japanese do it the opposite way. Here is the branch of a cherry tree, or a landscape with sailing boats. From this whole the student cuts out his compositional unit in the shape of a square, a circle, or a rectangle. He selects his shot!' Thus what Western scenography forecloses is the *cutting out* [*coupure*] which sets up the representation. It is this cutting out which reappears in the hallucinatory form of the 'impression of reality' with which its figuration is obsessed; and in quite another way, historically, in its dialectical subversion on the basis of its fragmentary dispersion, its dissemination.

With this cutting and fragmentation in mind (the fragment is the *signifier* produced as the effect of a cut, a textual de-cision displacing the meaning, 'a pulverized stone in the tiered layers of the volume of the whole', to invoke Sollers again), we must determine how pertinent a syntagmatics of the large filmic units is.[3] More generally, we must determine the extent to which a cinema of denotation (in the Metzian sense) is pertinent; for denotation, supported by the 'analogical' (and even coded) snare, has the effect of constraining film and its reading to a transcendental semantic level which is 'cinematic language' articulated in its narrative function, and of 'condemning' connotation to the role of 'artistic' supplement, expressive redundance. ('But literature and cinema are by their very nature condemned to *connotation*, because denotation always comes *before* their artistic enterprise, in the sense that "before" literature denotation was secured by *idiom*. "Before" cinema-art it is secured (1) by perceptual analogy; (2) by cinema-language, which incorporates a partial denotative code (issuing from earlier investigations of connotation)': Christian Metz, *Essais sur la signification . . .*, p. 80.)

This 'analogical' snare (naturalization of the image), which has characterized Western figuration since the Cinquecento, is reduplicated in a specific fashion in the cinema: (1) in the continuous reproduction of the movement of figures already produced 'without human intervention' (really at issue here is a snare mechanism, and to deny this is to deceive oneself); and (2) in the 'classical' economy of the cinema, especially the American cinema, which still largely dominates though its position is weakened, by the welding together of the diachronic articulations that are devoted to an essentially narrative function and therefore to be effaced as such for the benefit of narrative fluidity. The latter is thereby valorized, endowed with that surplus-value called 'the impression of reality' (Bazin: 'We can classify, if not rank, cinematic styles according to the gain in reality that they represent.' – *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*, IV, p. 22). The diachronic venture of figures in the land of narrative can thereby furnish the 'proof', a double proof, of the *profound* (ontological) 'verisimilitude', 'fidelity' (loyalty) of filmic figuration in relation to 'the real', this 'real' in itself apparently posing no problems.[4]

Obscured here is the ideological/symbolic reality of the 'spontaneous' recognition effect, which is the result of the mechanical production of a certain type of figuration, the production apparatus 'disappearing from its production', and the *eye* of the subject/spectator substituting for it and thereby tying up the imaginary scene. This recognition effect and this imaginary scene, which are purely ideological, are literally *consecrated* by the 'scientificity' of a semiology which states that the filmic text (and more generally the figurative text, of which the former 'is a part', which is not entirely self-evident) originates on a purely denoted level. Even if it is admitted that, in all concrete films, 'pure' denotation does not exist, it is postulated *a priori* as the basis for intelligibility in a communicative structure. One can only repeat what Jean-Louis Schefer (*Scénographie du'un tableau*, Seuil) has said: denotation cannot be conceived as a simple designation, for in the representative structure *and as* a representative structure it necessarily *implicates* a systematic process of *definition*. 'In these circumstances we must reconsider . . . the idea of a chronological, methodological or logical anteriority of the denoted in discourse: it is a notion that no doubt flourishes in linguistics characterized by a slightly rigid Saussureanism, but which here entails, by way of a whole network of simplifications, an absolute reduction of the status of the image as a text.'

It is obviously impossible, at the start of a reading, to avoid the effects of denotation, in that a designation ('a cat', for example) is at work. A 'shot of a cat' – assuming one can speak in this way – cannot be translated or integrally converted into the currency of a linguistic statement [*énoncé*] of the type 'here is a cat'; it nevertheless designates it, in an 'immediate' reading, as subject of the statement 'a cat' (that is, in the first place not a dog or a rat). This fact has generally been used as a basis for censuring all non-linear cinematic dynamics (which is why Eisenstein and Vertov have a lot to teach us) and *a fortiori* any reading not subject to diachrony, any reading which does not slavishly reiterate the narrative as the final appeal of readability. But a 'shot of a cat' obviously has no *meaning*, if the word 'meaning' is to have any active significance. It can only mean something transversely, or, if you like, diagonally (or, to use Eisenstein's term, *vertically*) with respect to this designation effect. In the *transformational* passage from designation to definition, which constitutes as it were the moment of reading (though most films are made to obstruct this moment), denotation is lost *and simultaneously constituted* (we need to think about the economy of this loss and this birth) in actualized connotations, in the opening out of the signifying overdetermination of the 'designated'.

In conclusion I would say that the institution of an *a priori* level of denotation in film is semiotically connected to the importance given, in a 'formally' heterogeneous structure like film, to the level of the *figuration* (in relation to that of sound, for example). It is the ideology overdetermining this importance which is 'overthrown' (with all the implied problems of a *dialectical* materialist film practice) by the 'Dziga Vertov group', especially in *Vent d'Est* and *Pravda*; and this has as its object a political reading that would take the place of those fantasies of politicization in recent films which so conveniently make the fiction 'acceptable'. This in no way means that the reading engendered by the films of the Dziga Vertov group is not phantasmic, nor on the other hand that there is one reading that is phantasmic and one that is not. To the extent that the image implies phantasm, there are at least two types of opposed readings (whose stakes are opposed): (1) a reading paralysed inside the specular scene, which in cinema is subject to the effects of the pleasure [*jouissance*] of the dramatic scansion, blocked in the narrative; (2) a diagonal reading on the surface of the representation which opens out the text from its overdeterminations in a fictive space (and therefore a space that is *also* phantasmic, *but* not closed, continually displaced by the fracturing or fission of the scene, a *strategic* space) on to another scene, which is the economic scene worked on by history.

Such a 'reading' can be produced not just on paper, but also, for example, in a certain kind of film practice. A materialist practice whose boundaries, at least, are marked out.

Translated by Lindley Hanlon

Notes

1 'Even the most partial and fragmentary "shot" (the shot film people call the close-up) still presents a complete piece of reality. The close-up is only a shot that is closer than others.' (Christian Metz, *Essais sur la signification* . . . , p. 117.) Qualifiers like 'partial' and 'fragmentary' always refer implicitly (and, in the case of terms used to designate shot size, almost without exception) to an ideal point of view which would encompass the 'totality' of space, a concept which clearly only makes sense in theological terms. Even Eisenstein, who nevertheless thought of the fragment in terms of its dynamic interaction with other 'fragments', could not avoid imagining at the end of film history 'a total image within which the elementary fragmentary images are ranged' (*Notes of a Film Director*; quoted by Sylvie Pierre in 'Eléments pour un théorie du photogramme', *Cahiers* 226–7); in other words, a reabsorption of the heterogeneous. We might say that it is inasmuch as the close-up *points to* its status as a fragment that it necessarily has only a marginal function in the prevailing scenography. It should be added, however, that it *loses* its character as fragment in one particular case: when the content of the shot is a *face*. This is in fact the most common usage. The face, in the West, is not seen as a fragment, but as a whole, as the symbol and emblem of the body's unity. In this sense, the close-up is at the top of a scenographic pyramid (the 'base' of which is the general shot) whose vertical support, the 'spinal column', is the specularized human body.

I should make it clear that I am referring to Metz's earlier research. (Author's note.)

2 See Ch. 16 in this volume.

3 The empirical basis of the *grande syntagma*, which Metz makes clear in his work ('To determine the number and nature of the major syntagmatic *types* used in present-day cinema, our starting-point must be current observations – existence of the 'scene', the 'sequence', 'alternating montage', etc. – as well as certain as it were pre-semiological analyses by critics, historians and theoreticians of cinema . . .'), leads us back to the illusion of the text's autonomy by giving a privileged position to linearity, to 'lived experience', to the 'flow of life'; that is, to the diachronic level where the denotation effects are reiterated ('It is clear, however, that the "autonomy" of the autonomous segments themselves is not one of *independence*, since each one only acquires its *definitive* meaning in relation to the film in its entirety, this being the *maximum syntagma* of cinema', *Essais*, p. 125; my emphasis of 'definitive'). (Author's note.)

4 In other words, narrative functions as a snare (sometimes explicitly so, as in *Young Mr Lincoln*). (Author's note.)

18

Jacques Aumont, Pascal Bonitzer, Jean Narboni, Jean-Pierre Oudart: '*The New Babylon:* the "Commune" Metaphor'

('La métaphore "commune" ', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 230 and 232, July and October 1971)

In connection with Kozintsev's text[1] and by way of introducing our analysis, we reproduce below the following commentary by Nikolai Lebedev[2] as a symptom of a blinkered survey of the specific 'historical discourse' on which Kozintsev and Trauberg's *New Babylon* hinges.

> The film-makers focused their attention not so much upon the plot, which is sketchy from a literary standpoint, as upon the conflict between two worlds, two Parises: the sated, satisfied Paris of the bourgeois and the *cocotte* and the poor, hungry Paris of the working-class districts, struggling for a brighter future, but too poorly organized and consequently defeated.
>
> Kozintsev and Trauberg stuck to the well-known events of the Paris Commune, but they did not show them in sequence; they presented only isolated episodes, cinematic illustrations of the history of the Commune. That was a major flaw in the film and made it hard for the average viewer to follow. The film-makers attached primary importance to re-creating the period atmosphere of Paris and interpreting it emotionally. Yet, as in their previous work, they sought inspiration not in life and historical facts, but in literature and art.
>
> They studied in detail works by contemporaries of the Commune: the novels of Emile Zola (especially *Au bonheur des dames*) and the Impressionist painters, Manet, Degas, Renoir.
>
> The result was a very brilliant film, a spectacular display of Impressionism; but it was too aesthetic. Everything in it had been cultivated with such refinement that, although viewers might admire each individual shot in itself, they remained cold and indifferent to the human tragedy unfolding on the screen. This was a sign not just of the inadequacy of the film-makers' penetration into the spirit of the events, but also of the influence on Kozintsev and Trauberg of Eisenstein's theories of intellectual cinema.
>
> What is presented in *The New Babylon* is not the living characters of the Commune, but concepts of the principal class forces involved in the revolt and its repression. . . . In their effort to portray sweeping generalities, the FEKS[3] showed the typical without the individual. Deprived of real concreteness, the film's characters became pale symbols and their fate did not interest

> the viewer. In moving away from the expressionism of *The Overcoat* [1926] and the romanticism of *SVD* [1927], Kozintsev and Trauberg had arrived, not at realism, but at a calculated symbolism. After *The New Babylon* the FEKS's ideological-creative crisis emerged with particular clarity; its symptoms had been perceptible long before, and its source may be found in the FEKS's formalist positions.
>
> In the interval between *The Devil's Wheel* [1926] and *The New Babylon*, Kozintsev and Trauberg had acquired rich professional experience: they had not only mastered all the 'secrets' of the director's art and enriched the arsenal of cinema's expressive means with various stylization processes, but they had also created a film-making collective, the best in all Soviet cinema. . . .
>
> But in those remote reaches, far from the ideological tasks of major Soviet art, in which the FEKS had been confined from the beginning, their brilliant formal mastery found no valid application.

The weaknesses which mark this condensed example of mechanistic reading can, it seems to us, be grouped into two major (and correlative) types:

1

The referential illusion: a characteristic of the problematics of dogmatic realism which settles on formulas like 'they sought inspiration not in life and historical facts, but in literature and art', and forgoes any grasp of the process of *écriture* as the integration-criticism-transformation of other texts and other *écritures*, and of the 'realist' effect as the product of that work. (See the vast amount of documentation by Kozintsev and Trauberg in the fields of painting, literature, etc.; cf. also what Kozintsev has to say about Marx's text as source material, and his inscription into his film of metaphors from Marx's *Civil War in France*.) Here we can only cite Barthes:

> Thus we arrive at the paradox which governs the entire pertinence of the historical discourse (in relation to other types of discourse): the fact only ever has a linguistic existence (as a term in a discourse), and yet here it is as if this existence were the pure and simple 'copy' of another existence located in an extra-structural field called the 'real'. This is probably the only discourse in which the referent is seen as external to the discourse, yet without ever being accessible other than within the discourse. We must therefore locate the place of the 'real' in the discursive structure more precisely. The historical discourse presupposes, so to speak, a double and thoroughly twisted operation. In the first phase (and this breakdown is, of course, purely metaphorical), the referent is detached from the discourse, external and fundamental to it, and seen as governing it. This is the *res gestae* phase, and the discourse is offered simply as *historia rerum gestarum*. But in the second phase, the signified itself is driven out and merged with the referent; the referent enters into direct relation with the signifier, and the discourse, which is charged only with *expressing* the real, assumes it is doing without the fundamental term of imaginary structures, namely the signified. Like all discourses laying claim to 'realism', the historical discourse thus supposedly only knows a semantic scheme with two terms,

> the referent and the signifier. As is known, the (illusory) confusion between the referent and the signified is what defines self-referential discourses, such as the performative discourse; it might be said that the historical discourse is an artificial performative discourse, in which what appears as the verifying (or descriptive) element is really only the signifier of the act of speech as an act of authority. . . . In other words, in 'objective' history, the 'real' is always only an unformulated signified, sheltering behind the seeming omnipotence of the referent. ('Le discours de l'histoire', *Information sur les sciences sociales*, VI, 4, August 1967.)

In this instance it may seem comic that Barthes' example of this type of symptomatic distortion is none other than Thiers.[4] ('This referential illusion, or the confusion between referent and signified, was expressed with much purity and naiveté by Thiers when he defined the historian's ideal in these terms: "To be simply true, to be what things are in themselves, to be no more than them, to exist only through them, like them and to the same extent." ')

2 This naive *and* dogmatic concept of history and its narration, a view of things 'in long shot', as Eisenstein would say, and a referential illusion which is by definition blind to any *écriture* process, necessarily makes it impossible for Lebedev (and many others) to consider – except in order to denigrate as formalism – the metaphorical play of a discourse in which the signs of *énonciation* take the lead (complicating the 'simple' time of history, its linearity, and the dead, coded order of the 'thread' of events). Thus Lebedev talks about 'pale symbols' where Kozintsev and Trauberg worked tenaciously to recover the chronicle's diminished figurative energy, to restore the worn, faded lines of the engraving, to bring the Commune *back to life* ('the Commune is not dead'), to revive its sleeping *figures* ('the film stock "reacted" ').[5] (Kozintsev explains this himself in the article mentioned above, without, however, avoiding the 'tangible'/'intelligible' pairing which is one of the major oppositions constituting the language of metaphysics.) We are not going to deny that the film-makers' tenacity had certain lapses which affected the cinematic inscription; in fact, this will be one of the main concerns of the second part of this article. But it is necesary to locate a problematic before one can go on to observe the missing elements in a *particular* problematic or those which overdetermine it.

The New Babylon is a 'historical-political' film; to analyse it we must first consider its principal determination, which originates in a *double reference* to:

1 a past revolutionary event which is 'definitively over' (but whose lesson and extensions are infinite for the revolutionary movement; cf. the writings of Marx and Lenin), which has no direct historical offspring (that is, was not *directly* productive or generative of revolutionary struggles), and, in

Marxist tradition, has already acquired the status of an *'original'* (first dictatorship of the proletariat) and *exemplary* action;
2 *the historical situation of Russia in 1929.* The film inscribes into its fiction, as do most Soviet films of the period (in a variety of modes), an *idea,* originating in Marxist *concepts* and reinscribed in the discourse which that society maintained concerning its revolutionary development: the *idea of productivity* (cf. for example, Eisenstein's 'On the question of a materialist approach to form':[6]

> The revolutionary character of *Strike* is due to the fact that the film draws its innovative principle, not from the series of 'artistic phenomena', but from that of *immediately useful* phenomena – in particular, the structural principle which consists of presenting the processes of production in the film. This is an important choice in that it goes beyond the aesthetic sphere . . . , but it is even more important in that, from a *materialist* point of view, it is precisely the aesthetic sphere which has been explored; its principles are the only ones capable of *determining* the ideology of the *forms of a revolutionary art,* just as they have determined revolutionary ideology in general . . . [and a little later] process of production, that is . . . process of struggle.)[7]

This double determination implied on the one hand the inscription of the events in *mythic* terms (the Commune as a *representation* of the class struggle, defining a relation of irreducible antagonism at once paroxysmic and fixed); and on the other hand, in so far as the film was addressed to a Soviet audience of 1929, the inscription of the events in terms of productivity – in other words, the marking in the fiction itself of the effects of these events in terms of the positive progress of the class struggle. This *double inscription* constitutes the *principal contradiction* of the discourse of *The New Babylon.*

This contradiction (which can be traced in other Soviet films of the period) is inscribed in *The New Babylon* in very particular modes. Kozintsev and Trauberg's film does not inscribe it in a fiction conceived on the basis of a resolutory dynamic (in reference to the Marxist theory and practice of class struggle). Such a mode both:

1 ceaselessly repeats the definition of the conflicts at play in terms of the bourgeoisie/proletariat antagonism (as *The New Babylon* does also);
2 inscribes as a supplement to this antagonism a *third term* which transforms the ideological discourse of these films into a truly political discourse, in so far as it integrates into its action the moment of the rise to consciousness (idealist in Pudovkin, materialist in Eisenstein)[8] achieved by the participants who particularize (in that socially diversified groups are involved) and, through metonymy, generalize the conflict. This is the productive contradiction of Russian films of the 1920s: assembling a historical tableau and, at the same time, a functional dynamic which *includes* the historical future. Hence, positing the two antagonistic terms (bourgeoisie/proletariat) = exposing a paradigmatic system and displacing

it, making it act syntagmatically by throwing if off-centre through the addition of a third term (a supplement) = an 'observer', 'a reader' (representing the viewer), who is led to intervene productively at the level of the principal contradiction in its decisive historical development. (Example: Marfa, in Eisenstein's *Old and New.*)

Eisenstein in particular implicates in the relation between the two primary terms of the antagonism (bourgeoisie/proletariat) a third, which submits to the antagonism and then transforms it retroactively. For example, in *Potemkin* the group of sailors who hesitate between the two sides, and whose active intervention, invoked within the fiction itself through their involvement in the conflict (they are ordered by their officers to choose sides under penalty of death), reasserts and extends the conflict which is to spread to the city as a whole. Whereas *The New Babylon* very soon posits a 'floating' third term (the peasant-soldier) between the first two (that is, ideologically 'floating', but objectively on the side of repression); and because the soldier receives the Commune's revolutionary 'message' from the lips of the woman who is about to be executed, he inscribes in the fiction the productivity of the event in which he has thus participated in erotic *and* prophetic terms: he does not gain in political consciousness, draws no lesson from the event, and receives his own message back when the heroine cries: 'Jean, we'll meet again in our Paris!'

The relations between first two terms of the inscription (the Communards/the Versaillais) and the third (the peasant-soldier) in *The New Babylon* cannot be deduced directly from the film's double ideological determination and its implicit contradiction (representing the class struggle and inscribing its progress). Indeed, inasmuch as the terms in question have been inscribed in a fiction whose structure appears particularly rigid and constrictive, these relations, and the effects of meaning they produce, are overdetermined by their inscription in that fiction. It is from an analysis of the *signifying economy* of the fiction, therefore, that one may deduce the general problematic in which its discourse is inscribed, and the way it inscribes that problematic in its discourse. The question, then, is to discover:

1 what discourse on the Commune is perpetuated, or rather reinscribed, in *The New Babylon* by the means specific to Kozintsev and Trauberg's cinematic practice;
2 how the interpellation of the spectator, as a function of the general double ideological determination of Soviet films of this period, is inscribed in this discourse;
3 to what political subject the discourse could be addressed, bearing in mind the particular inscription of that double determination in the relation between the three terms constituting the fiction.

The signifying economy of the fiction

The New Babylon presents (in accordance with a repetitive, antithetical structure *at all levels*) a series of pairs of figures [*figurants*] by means of an insistent and invariable procedure which consists of:

1 producing mutual effects of the designation of their antagonistic relationship by both members of a pair (or series of pairs). This designation itself is inscribed:

(a) first, in the *linking* of one shot to the next by a look, or by other plastic elements which, through reduplication, also produce mutual designation (the gargoyles of Notre Dame and the cannons of the Versailles contingents);

(b) second, *within the scenic frame of one shot*, in the final scenes, after the Versailles contingents have entered Paris and the Commune is defeated (the scene in the café; the final execution scene);

2 subjectively reinscribing the effects of this mutual designation through the intervention of the third term which genuinely establishes the fiction as *reality* (as belonging to the real) – the peasant soldier – in that:

(a) he constantly challenges the spectator, whom he faces directly;

(b) he is himself challenged by other figures from the two opposing camps (is subjected to two contradictory types of ideological confrontation).

These two fictional procedures inscribe the film's double determination, in that the first re-marks the antagonistic relation of the figure pairs, i.e. it actualizes the *ideological* definition to which their inscription refers. (This inscription is, moreover, overdetermined in *The New Babylon*, by both the iconography and the novels of the nineteenth century and the theatrical metaphors in Marx's texts, which have been literally reinscribed in the film.) And in that the second inscribes the productivity of this relation, the resulting progress of the class struggle, in other words the conscious grasp on the part of the third term of his insertion in the struggle, and the resulting effects, in the fiction itself.

More precisely, the *function* of the first process is to imprint in the fiction the definition of the conflicts in play there in terms of class struggle. The function of the second process is to ensure the reinscription of the antagonism inscribed by the first in a fictional process such that, in its practice, the third term undergoes and reasserts the effects of the preliminary definition, which is anterior to the fictional inscription.

This twofold process defines the signifying economy of a cinematic discourse where the referent of the figures is always *ultimately* the antagonistic bourgeoisie/proletariat pair, but where the signification effects do not consist solely in a permanent, repetitive and fixed actualization of that referent; they also incorporate its renewal, through the inscription of the mutual designation effects into the fictional process by virtue of the integration into the conflict of figures *whose status is thereby transformed.*

These effects of designation can be various, according to the film, and the productivity of the conflicts they expose can thus itself be inscribed in various ways: in idealist terms (a revelation or quasi-mystical rise to consciousness); in mechanistic, material terms (the assumption of a position as a direct result of a physical affect); or in historical/dialectical materialist terms (the assumption of a position as a textual effect: a physical affect itself *inscribed* in a social context – the rotten meat on board the *Potemkin*).

In the type of signifying economy corresponding to the latter kinds of fiction, the elements which activate the conflict in play (both the material affects and the new participants) are implicated in the definition of the antagonism which their inscription is to actualize through *the retroactive effect of that inscription.* That is, these designators of relations of conflict which pre-exist *their own* fictional inscription are subsequently subjected to the effects of that inscription, for the designation effect of the first two terms of the antagonism (bourgeoisie/proletariat) momentarily excludes them from the definition of that antagonism, but is always then replaced by an effect which defines their own position in that antagonism (a position in no sense inscribed in ideological terms, but in practical and political terms: the waverers aboard the *Potemkin* who are called on to take sides). Thus both the affect constituting the immediate material cause of the conflict, and the element resulting from it (that is, the character or group that inscribes its productive political effect), are finally encompassed in the definition of the antagonism and are thus inscribed in the film's discourse *in terms of overdetermination,* repeated in different contexts and producing multiple signifying effects which redefine the other figures, and also define them in terms that are no longer simply ideological, but political.

The signifying operations at work in the fiction of *The New Babylon* are such that the film seems to belong to this type of signifying economy and to pervert it at the same time, in so far as:

1 The distribution of the figures within shots closed off in terms of scene (one side of the struggle per shot – 'links' from shot to shot and camp to camp which are precisely not links, but function instead as *indicators* of an unresolvable distance, an irreducible gap) *prohibits the inscription of affects except in terms of the more-than-real;* that is, fetishized effects of reality, proliferating and distributed according to a system of rhymes which are sometimes purely decorative (the gargoyles of Notre Dame/the cannons of the Versailles contingents). In other words, ultimately, the scenic closure of the shots prohibits any inscription of the materiality of the conflict (hand-to-hand fighting is impossible, as is the inscription of the body, in a conflict inscribed in terms of representation).

2 Such a distribution thus inscribes the whole fiction in terms of *the real.*

The effect is to fetishize, by means of reduplication, the scenic effects on which the film-makers banked for very precise ideological signifying effects when they inscribed the bourgeoisie's non-productive expenditure as well as the Communards' heroic exaltation in terms of the more-than-real. (Cf. The *selling* 'theme' which runs through the film, to be understood (1) economically and (2) as a selling-betrayal: France is 'sold out' to the Prussians by the bourgeois government.)[9]

3 The inscription of the third term of this scenic fiction as the eye-witness who brings into being the final result of the conflict (its productive effect) by receiving the defeated Commune's 'message' seems to determine a very particular inscription of his implication in the conflict: what 'affects' him is first, a *separation* from his love, inscribed as the object of his desire passing out of frame,[10] and a death which is not shown. In other words, in the fiction itself, a *break* (separation/death/movement out of frame) has been inscribed as this character's affect. Consequently, this character simultaneously designates the others as virtually dead, is affected by their struggle, and inscribes the result of that struggle: it is at the moment when he has definitively designated them as dead that he receives their 'message'. But at the same time it is this designation which inscribes them as living, that is, within the scenic fiction, as real; this character thus sustains their inscription as real only by designating them as dead.

As the representative of the representation of the class struggle which is *The New Babylon,* and as the last survivor of the fiction, he finally inscribes his 'message' as timeless and eternal, but literally succumbs to the effects of this definitive inscription.[11]

The inscription of this film's fictional discourse in such a rigid scenic framework has thus produced a certain number of signification effects determined by the inscription of the figures as real. But this inscription of the figures as real is itself overdetermined by a constant literal reference to Marx's *stage* metaphors. Marx too inscribed his revolutionary figures in more-than-real terms, and his 'imaginary' bourgeois figures in terms of masks and simulacra (cf. Kozintsev's article). Thus a more detailed analysis of the overdetermination of this fictional discourse will lead us to investigate Marx's inscription, in the margins of his theoretical discourse, of the protagonists of the *Marxist stage.*

The Marxist stage

Within the framework of a theory of representational systems, the Marxist critique of the institution of the bourgeois state should occupy a particularly important place, in so far as the critique is aimed at the very notion of political *representation* as the ideological foundation of that institution. Indeed, Marx undertakes an actual reading of the political discourse of the bourgeoisie and the analysis of its political rituals. In his texts he strongly emphasizes not only the absence of any inscription of the real social relations of production in the discourse of the bourgeois state, but also the invariable repetition of the justifications for its legitimacy. In so far as the institution does not really sanction bourgeois economic practice, the discourse of the French Revolution having definitively foreclosed the inscription of its historical referent (the medieval concept of Debt), the legitimacy of the bourgeois state could be sustained only by exemplary reference to an institution whose discourse itself contained no inscription of an economic practice homologous to that of medieval society. Marx thus points up the relation between the silence maintained by the bourgeoisie on its economic practice once it assumed power, and the historical references it gives for its institution (the Roman republic). But the term 'imaginary' with which Marx denounces this institution relates equally to the insistent inscription in the discourse of the French revolutionaries of *theatrical metaphors* – which Marx reinscribes in his text – and of the *scenic dimension* of the political rituals of the Revolution.

What Marx points up, by inscribing it metaphorically in his text, is the particular style of the political discourse of a class which succeeds the monarchy in terms of representation, a class which, having set itself up by reference to royal power, itself defines its deputies as the nation's 'representatives'; and, in inscribing the body of its political rituals in scenic terms, also inscribes the historical reference it adopts in these terms (the Roman tribune).

Representation, the keystone of bourgeois political ideology, is overdetermined:

1 by the historical inscription of its governmental authority as successor to royal power; that is, by the fact that, having taken power, the bourgeoisie inscribes itself in the ruling position by repressing that which ideologically overdetermines the King's occupancy of the position (namely, the theological discourse which defined it as a position of divine right, source of the transmission of transcendental decrees). The bourgeoisie occupies this place by repressing the Ancien Régime's theological attributes of power, in other words by now succeeding royalty not in the mode of filiation, but in that of repetition (re-elected assemblies); it forecloses the theological notion of succession (murder of the royal family);
2 by instituting the representative as spokesman of the citizens whose voices he carries and whose votes he receives, although his election does not designate him as anything but their equivalent.

The political representative's discourse and practice would always be characterized by his inability henceforth to occupy the position of power by virtue of divine right – to inscribe his decrees in theological terms. His discourse was inscribed in the outlines of a now empty place, via the detour imposed by the fact that he could no longer discourse in his own name (overdetermined by the name of God) but had to do so in the name of an imaginary entity in which the cause he served was inscribed (the

Nation, personified by a woman), a cause no longer personified by any living being. Hence the particular modes of the bourgeois administrative style, impersonal and indirect.

In *The Civil War in France* Marx systematically inscribes his bourgeois figures in scenic terms, literally re-marking the stage effects of the political discourse of its representatives, and inscribing these representatives in terms of gross caricature which relate to the tradition of the *chansonniers* (at the close of the eighteenth century, these tavern shows were privileged places for the criticism of royalty). The representatives of the bourgeoisie, in Marx's text, are thus inscribed as comic actors and marionettes. They are also inscribed as *dead men*. Indeed, Marx's analysis of the composition of the Versailles government strips it of its republican ideological camouflage and exposes the adherence of a good many of its members to various monarchist tendencies. And literally, in Marx's text, these figures are inscribed as *ghosts* back from the dead. The political stage is the place of death, or rather, the representatives are described as dead in so far as they succeed the deceased royalty, thus occupying the place of one who is dead (the King) and one who has disappeared (the Emperor).

Thus in analysing the political compromises of the regimes that succeeded the monarchy after the French Revolution, Marx inscribes in his text the bourgeoisie's transformation of political institutions and style of discourse in terms such that the notion of political representation undergoes the deconstructive effects of his historical analysis, carried out in terms of overdetermination; this extends to the effects of style which Marx reinscribes, re-marking their recurrent structure, without himself effecting a reading: the outlines of an empty, untenable place, vacated by the theological monarchy whose abolition imposed an indirect style of command; an interpellation which marks itself off from the one which signified, for the subject of the monarchy, his subjection to the decrees of the royal incarnation of divinity, and which was also marked in its rituals as well as its active interventions. In Marx's text the inscription of the governmental authority on a stage designates and describes its position as successor to the theological monarchy and its indirect, camouflaged practice of power; and at the same time it connotes, in terms of comedy, Marx's moral condemnation of it.

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The scenic casting of the figures and their relation to each other in Marx's *The Civil War in France* emerge as recurring effects of the overdetermination of his text by his historical (political) analysis of the events; that is, by the position of the conflict whose determinations and progression Marx analyses in terms of class struggle. This position, or rather its reinscription in terms of class struggles, leads Marx to constant redistributions of the figures (articulations, condensations, metaphors), the function of which is continually to reformulate the position. Such redistributions are thus *never a decorative embellishment* to Marx's analysis, but always the insistent effects of the productive contradictions of Marx's practice of discursive exposition (historical analysis/political situation of the conflict).

Marx is thus led to reinscribe the effects of his historical analysis by constantly positing the relation between the antagonists in terms of class struggles, not just according to *the order of the historical facts he is analysing* (which, in most cases, consist of the bourgeois protagonists taking up positions – marked by a particular style of discourse for which Marx carries out a genuine 'symptomal' reading – and of material activities whose ideological determinations Marx always scrutinizes with extraordinary perception when analysing particular episodes of the Versailles repression or noting the reactions of the bourgeoisie to events); but that relation is also posed according to the order of the *political discourse* he constructs in setting out those historical facts (here we are back with the fundamental investigation/exposition distinction).

This analysis, even on the level of the real facts it describes in fiercely polemical journalistic terms, is constantly subtended by a political discourse that draws all its strength from inscribing Marx's historical desire (for the attainment of class consciousness by the proletariat, its assumption of political power, the abolition of its economic exploitation).

This desire, that the proletariat should come to the place of the real, cannot be resolved by a definitive position of 'dominance' for the proletariat (its taking power being only a stage – the resolution of the class antagonisms of bourgeois society – and never a definitive suppression of *contradictions*), since Marx's historical analysis and his theoretical system (contrary to Hegel) preclude the closure of his discourse in terms of 'dominance' and inscribe history as never-ending (the impossibility of nullifying the contradictions of the relations of production within a definitive system of the distribution of products; the impossibility of nullifying the dialectics of ideological production, in other words the work of inscription of its subject). The productive contradiction of Marx's political and theoretical discourse, at work in the text of *The Civil War in France*, precisely inhibits any stoppage in the production of scenic metaphors, which are constantly presented as the products of a signifying practice overdetermined by this political and theoretical discourse; metaphors which do not therefore set up rigid frameworks, even in the most condensed formulas of the text. They do not institute an unconsidered ideological closure in Marx's discourse (they do not actualize the class struggle theme itself upon the timeless 'stage' of history); nor do they set up a fixed and repetitive formulation of Marx's political demand (they do not inscribe the class struggle in purely Manichean terms, despite the strong articulation into relations of antithetical opposition which they imprint on the text).

The principal effects of the metaphors consist in:

1 a dialectical formulation of the contradiction between the proclaimed

positions and the real practices of both antagonists (the barring off of the scene in the bourgeois camp connotes that class's position of retreat, the ideological camouflage of its real practices);
2 the reinscription of this formulation in political terms (in this case the scenic frame inscribed as the ideological effect of the interpellation of the antagonists as subjects);
3 the re-marking of the scansions of Marx's discourse, of the articulation of its historical analysis, and of his political reinscription of that analysis when he defines the practices and discourses he analyses in terms of class practices and class discourses (the position of the figures on a double stage is then inscribed as the effect of the interpellation of his readers as subjects and as witnesses, determined by his own political desire).

Thus Marx's discourse explicitly presents its object (the Commune) as a political and historical construction. In precise terms as a historical construction relating to an event that was already virtually over when Marx began to write *The Civil War in France;* and one that is overdetermined by the inscription of an actual political desire (that of Marx and his readers, i.e. the members of the Internationale) which, through the analysis, is provided with both an ideological cause and a means for its subject (the revolutionaries) to clear a path into the real (in so far as that analysis dismantles the defence mechanisms and strategy of the adversary).

To the extent that economic determination does not come directly into play at the analytical level, the inscription of that political desire in *The Civil War in France* consists mainly in a reinscription of the failure of the Commune in terms of a prediction of the past (or of a present that is *almost* over), by a witness who is in fact verifying his own prediction of its defeat.

The analysis of this inscription seems to call for reference to the psychoanalytical theory of the production of the Lacanian object 'a', and to verify its formula ('sacrifice of the object by desire').

The inscription of the revolutionary desire in Marx's text displays its effects quite precisely in the death scenes or the scenes that anticipate the disappearance of the Commune. The inscription of the Commune and that of its repression overdetermine one another in such a way that, in the very moment of the fatal attack suffered by the Communards, Marx projects the exemplary figure of the Revolution in his text through a stage effect.

More precisely, the figure, or the gesture of exaltation, is inscribed at the moment when the revolutionaries are exposed to the enemy's *aim*. That is, in his discourse on revolutionaries doomed to die, Marx uses a fictional effect of predicting an (almost) past to inscribe them as already dead, already marked by the missiles that are to strike them down; he imprints, as it were, the anticipated mark of a break, and produces their exemplary figure as that which, at the moment when they are on the point of disappearing, survives their anticipated death, perpetuates the last moment, and actualizes (for Marx's reader/spectator) the revolutionary desire beyond the disappearance of the subject that supported it. This is exactly what gives Marx's text its exceptional character: it is at the same time the description of an event *and* its commemoration.[12]

In the order overdetermining Marx's political discourse – in what marks the relation of Marx the theoretician with a real event which confirmed the historical truth of his theory to the point of realizing his desire (the assumption of power by the proletariat), and which determined the Commune's position as 'primordial object', the first historical reference of the Marxist revolutionary discourse – we may say that this object's break (Marx's discourse as the justification of a defeated revolution by a revolutionary who inscribes it as the anticipation, announcement and productive *background of death* of a victorious revolution) is inscribed as the mark of a mortal wound inflicted on the object (on the revolutionary figures or on the personification of the Commune) by an execution; an execution which functions as the instrument of what we might call the 'fantasy' structure of Marx's discourse. For when Marx effects the murder, he designates the figures as occupying the forefront of a historical stage, *projecting themselves into its frame,* at the very moment of their disappearance; and he eternalizes their presence by this effect of projection. Thus there is a constant coalescing in Marx's text of several effects: the geographical description of Paris threatened by the armies from Versailles, the interpellation of the Commune as subject, and its reinscription as a figure of the Revolution designating the future by a projection of itself that exposes it to the enemy's fire, and vice versa.

So the historical inscription of Marx's political desire here passes via this symbolic break (in the psychoanalytical sense) with the vanished Commune (which is on the point of being annihilated when Marx begins writing). And it is always a metonymy, the product of the inscription of this break, which inscribes both the threat of the repression and its execution (but also sometimes the executioners, transformed into evanescent, tormenting objects of phantasm), and which formulates metaphorically Marx's desire that the proletariat, having assumed power, should rise to the foreground of the historical stage.

Hence we find a particular economy in the presentation and in the relations between the figures in the two camps:

1 The presentation of the proletariat as a body (one body) formulates Marx's political desire that the proletariat should become a real political unity. The proletariat, rendered present by the repeated inscription of the figure, which connotes it as an actor projecting himself into the frame of a theatrical stage, through the effect of projection itself designates the real (the hereafter of revolutionary struggles) in the very moment of its death.

2 While the proletariat of Paris figures as one actor and one body, the Versailles bourgeoisie figures as a *series* of actors, puppets, ghosts, animals, etc. The composition of this metaphor (a series of disparate figures

whose accumulation rhymes with the ostentatious economic dilapidation of the Second Empire, evoked by Marx at the same time) also determines Marx's casting of the bourgeois figures in the scenes which most clearly bear the mark of fantasy, those where a single character (the Commune) is physically 'harried' by a succession of aggressors as by a pack of animals (the bourgeoisie slashes, rends, blinds, and lynches the disarmed Communards, then *mimes* this scene).[13]

But while a fantasy structure imprints recurrent effects (sacrifice of the Commune/revolutionary exaltation) in Marx's text, the inscription of Marx's desire does not therefore give rise to any moralizing reduction of his historical analysis and his political discourse. The Commune in this discourse is never merely posited as the 'lost object' of the Revolution; the historical event is never transformed into a simple edifying example, but is always analysed as an episode in the class struggle: its historical conditions foretell the defeat of the Communards as analysed by Marx (a politically productive defeat from the viewpoint of the revolutionaries addressed by Marx's discourse).

It is nevertheless clear that the violence with which Marx inscribes the Versailles repression, and the fantasy structure regulating the casting and playing of the figures in these episodes, are determined by Marx's historical (chronological) position relative to an event that is at once contemporaneous with his *Civil War in France* and virtually past: an event for which the trauma of the break is so acutely felt by Marx that his *humour* at times decries its unbearable character. The humour of some particularly atrocious episodes of the repression sometimes inverts the effects of the inscription of the fantasy: it is not now the victims who laugh or pose as statues of the Revolution in front of their executioners, but the executioners who accuse their victims of being bad comedians.[14] Marx very precisely inscribes here the symbolic determination of his scenic inscription. 'Behind' the scene is death, and this again confirms the fantasy structure of this inscription, so that the actor's projection beyond the confines of the scene – which seals his execution – actualizes a subjective division which Marx inscribes with reference to Hegel (in itself/for itself).

In so far as Kozintsev and Trauberg's work and their reinscription of Marx's effects of *écriture* hypostatizes these effects by removing them from their networks of overdetermination (by cutting them off from Marx's theoretical practice and political discourse), and utterly misrecognizes them, it consists of a fixed, repeated re-marking of the connotations imprinted by the stage metaphors of *The Civil War in France*, and which are reimprinted in a mechanistic mode by means of the scenic code employed by the film-makers.

In consequence, when they reinscribe the most trenchant formulas of Marx's text (particularly those intended for the reader's ideological edification, those in which Marx's political desire is imprinted according to the logic of fantasy in the most determining manner), the film-makers produce a cinematic discourse on the Commune which conveys precise ideological effects. And these must now be examined within the historical context of their inscription (a victorious, but internally and externally threatened, proletarian revolution), and within the order of the ideological determinations of the producers of those effects, in relation to this historical context. (Film-makers who, as opposed to Marx, while excluding a rigorous historical analysis of the defeat of the Commune and producing the event in their fiction only in a way that is edifying, nevertheless inscribe in the foreground of their scene, and in the articulation of the fiction they set in motion, a series of figures which are persistently deficient in respect of a political position and a true revolutionary practice, and which both support a discourse that substitutes for a historical analysis, and actualize an ideological representation of the Commune.)

The major effects of this film's scenic inscription consist in producing its figures as real (without effects of 'realism' – that is, not in the mode of the transparency of the figure to the real referent) and articulating their antagonistic relation in a mode that is traumatizing for the viewer.

By thus instituting its discourse as real, *The New Babylon* imposes on its fiction the structural constraints of all discourses instituted as such, even while it assumes the ideological illusion of a 'materialist' work by its literal references to Marx's text and to the iconography and novels of the nineteenth century. Consequently, the scenic articulation of the relation between the figures, the casting of the figures implied in that articulation, and the signifying economy which governs both, produce precise ideological effects directly, within the film, so establishing an extremely rigorous and determining discourse on the history of the Commune:

1 The time of the film = the mythic time of the birth and death of the Commune (the end of the film = the death of the Communards), this birth and this death being constantly reiterated in the articulation of one shot with the next, in accordance with the logic of fantasy operating in Marx's text (uprising/repression); a logic reinscribed in the articulation of shots, with the admirable condensation which, out of the problematic of a revolution perpetually to be reborn from its foundation of death and from its anticipation of the revolution by figures already dead, is formed by the inscription '*Vive la Commune*' on a wall at the end of the film. The inscription *extends* along the path of the arm and then the body of the slain Communard, shot while writing it: a striking rounding off of this contradictory double operation.

2 Hence every event, every character's inscription in a shot, produces an effect of setting things in motion, so that the fiction is generated in a rigorously linear mode (every cause/effect repetition, renewal of the same antagonistic relation), while no third term ever marks the productivity of the event reduced to the staging of an antagonism. (Hence the particular position of the figures who set the fiction in motion without – as in

Eisenstein – dialecticizing the conflict they take part in; they can only be divided between the two camps, ideologically, politically, erotically.)
3 Such an inscription produces an insistent fictional effect; the events always seem to be happening for the first time (the scene of unpaving the street), each appearing as its own cause, and the entire discourse thus instituting the Commune as the mythic origin of the proletarian Revolution.
4 The hypostatizing of the effects of reality (of the inscription of the characters as real) thus produces a precise and systematically valorized ideological effect: the characters' gestures are magnified by their evanescent inscription, by the fact that they are always designated in the fiction, by their articulation with the other characters, as virtually dead. Kozintsev and Trauberg thus reinscribe literally in a series of edifying tableaux (cf. 1) the salient relationship – revolutionary gesture/traumatic break – of Marx's text.

What is thus foreclosed in Kozintsev and Trauberg's transformation of Marx's text is real history – not only in the sense that the film-makers do not inscribe any analysis of the Commune's history in their discourse (whence the film's strange construction: two great 'extreme sequences', the birth and death of the Commune, enclose a short series of shots presenting the Commune's accomplishments as public announcements: the Commune has decreed this or that); but also in so far as, out of the means by which Marx formulated a real political desire (out of what marked the dialectical articulation of Marx's political and ideological relation with the Commune, instituted in his discourse as both the primordial – sacrificial – object of the Revolution and an episode politically productive of real revolutionary struggles), the film-makers have only reinscribed the formulas which inscribed this desire in a prophetic mode (the figure of the Revolution rising above the massacre of the revolutionaries).

Thus:

1 The figuration of the bourgeoisie is no longer inscribed in terms of overdetermination, but in the form of a representative-type (a black-suited bourgeois) positioned in the forefront of a scene, while the entire background consists in a proliferation of indeterminate actors (a merry-go-round).
2 The proletarian figuration is inscribed as non-fragmented – either also in the form of representative-types, relating to a traditional physical type, massed together in one shot, or in the form of a mythological (female) figure.
3 The impossibility of inscribing the antagonists in one and the same shot proceeds from the need to maintain the purity of the ideological types. Showing the physical effects of the repression might ruin the unifying ideological effect of this inscription, in a discourse that cannot 'admit' any

reference to real history – in so far as it has instituted non-political relations among the figures and has fixed their inscription in an antagonistic pairing whose effect requires that the effect of scenic disjunction be permanently sustained. Hence the fact that this scenic disjunction – the valorization of the imaginary break instituted between the figures by the film's scenography – can only support the inscription of an erotic fiction constituted in the same mode as those of classical Hollywood fictions: that of a flight-pursuit between figures from one shot to the next, between a woman who personifies the Revolution and a man who 'wants' (lacks) the Revolution.
4 The film's erotic inscription is to be analysed in relation to (2) and (3). If a woman embodies the Revolution, then the threat of repression in the context of the film can only be inscribed in terms of castration. Inasmuch as the female figure constitutes a phallic signifier, the threat of aggression hanging over her is inscribed as the designation of castration. But it is precisely because the threat of arms designates castration (as repression of the sexual) that this mythic figure of the Revolution takes on its full dimension, in that the threat, in designating it as the phallus – as the signifier 'by which the subject identifies itself with its living being' (Lacan) – institutes it symbolically as *real* and as the figure of the Revolution, one and indivisible. In the same way, the working women who confront the viewer personify the erotic pleasure of work. Correlatively, castration is imposed upon the male figures who function as levers of the mechanism (the third terms), because the ideological determination of the relations between all the figures, and the film's lack of political inscription, are such that this function of leverage implies their position in the fiction as surplus or lack in relation to the social/ideological type they embody; and this surplus or lack is marked in their relations with the other figures through the metaphysical (erotic) reduplication of their lack of political determination (the peasant-soldier, always inscribed in a position of impotence like a castrated hero in the bourgeois novel), or of their ideological position (the bourgeois who, in his position of spectator at the Revolution – cf. Marx – impotently ogles the women).

'Capital's expenses of representation'

At this point in our analysis we feel justified in citing another fragment from Marx's text, taken this time not from *The Civil War in France* but from a section of *Capital* devoted to 'the transformation of surplus value into capital'. This quotation is intended as an introduction to a reading – not as an exhaustive grid or as soliciting a comparison. Its value will be proved by its ability, or otherwise, on the basis of the signifieds so introduced, to determine the signifiers of the system being examined (cf. J.-L. Schefer); indeed, in the present case, to delineate its closure.

> As capitalist production, accumulation, and wealth, become developed, the capitalist ceases to be the mere incarnation of capital. He has a fellow-feeling

> for his own Adam, and his education gradually enables him to smile at the rage for asceticism, as a mere prejudice of the old-fashioned miser. While the capitalist of the classical type brands individual consumption as a sin against his function, and as 'abstinence' from accumulating, the modernized capitalist is capable of looking upon accumulation as 'abstinence' from pleasure.
>
> 'Two souls, alas, do dwell within his breast;
> The one is ever parting from the other.' [*Faust*]
>
> At the historical dawn of capitalist production – and every capitalist upstart has personally to go through this historical stage – avarice, and desire to get rich, are the ruling passions. But the progress of capitalist production not only creates a world of delights; it lays open, in speculation and the credit system, a thousand sources of sudden enrichment. When a certain stage of development has been reached, *a conventional degree of prodigality*, which is also an exhibition of wealth, and consequently a source of credit, becomes a business necessity to the 'unfortunate' capitalist. Luxury *enters into capital's expenses of representation*. [Our emphasis.] Moreover, the capitalist gets rich, not like the miser, in proportion to his personal labour and restricted consumption, but at the same rate as he squeezes out the labour-power of others, and enforces on the labourer abstinence from all life's enjoyments. Although, therefore, the prodigality of the capitalist never possesses the *bona fide* character of the open-handed feudal lord's prodigality, but, on the contrary, has always lurking behind it the most sordid avarice and the most anxious calculation, yet his expenditure grows with his accumulation, without the one necessarily restricting the other. But along with this growth, there is at the same time developed in the breast a Faustian conflict between the passion for accumulation, and the desire for enjoyment.[15]

Revealed in this text, in its dense configuration, is the process by which the capitalist begins as the 'mere incarnation of capital', 'capital personified', an 'effect of the social mechanism in which he is but one cog', (in the same way that the worker for him is primarily simply a machine for producing surplus value): the process by which the capitalist, living this incarnation in undivided harmony and unity, is put in the position of being torn, in a 'Faustian conflict', between a frantic tendency towards accumulation (with its corollaries: avarice, greed, abstinence) and the increasing desire to profit from his possessions (expenditure, extravagance, enjoyment). The dissociation and 'split' are themselves determined by the development of accumulation and the enlargement of the area of consumption; they are the capitalist's manner of living and 'reflecting' the distinction between merchandise and its form as value, between use-value and exchange-value. (This reflection is 'torn' and contradictory but, as Marx insists, non-antagonistic; expenditure and accumulation never impede one another.) The development of productive forces – the basis of this transformation – thus brings into increasingly sharper relief the archaic, regressive and insupportable character of the social relations of production in capitalism (which the bourgeoisie fails to hide, despite its efforts to glut the area of consumption and draw attention to 'the noisy sphere of the superficial and the universally visible'). This discrepancy nevertheless cannot be resolved by itself (as in the economist's – revisionist – notion of rigid structures splitting apart under internal pressure), but requires the indispensable political intervention of the proletariat and its allies to aggravate it, to bring it to its term and suppress it through revolution.

We have tried to show that Marx's *The Civil War in France*, a text of polemical journalism for a militant intervention, was constantly overdetermined by a historical and political analysis where the dramatic stage effects produced are never the mere ornamentation of this generative foundation, but rather condensed effects. This is not the case with Kozintsev and Trauberg's film, in spite of (and finally because of) the film-makers' wish to stick literally to Marx's metaphors without tracing their genesis. Indeed, returning to *The New Babylon*, we find that:

1 The dissociation which 'affects' the capitalist (scrutinized by Marx as the tendency to enjoyment, the tendency to accumulation) figures in the sequences of the bourgeoisie's festivities as shots in which, against an indistinct, giddy, merry-go-round background, the faces of representatives of this class stand out in the foreground like engravings, to provide, against a background of petty spending and excitement, the necessary and complementary other side of cruelty, greed and brutality. This bipartite division is repeated and renewed from shot to shot (achieved, according to Kozintsev, by feats of real technical prowess), and moralistically inscribes the coexistence of a 'conventional degree of prodigality' ('capital's expenses of representation') and an indomitable greed (cf. the metaphor of selling, and the theme of 'I need love, we all need love', the capitalist's 'fellow-feeling for his own Adam').

2 Representation and the scenic apparatus are the object of a devalorization: they are reserved for the bourgeoisie, whose dissimulation, camouflage and lying 'nature' they mark. Everything that derives from 'artifice', the arbitrary and the conventional, from mask and parody (the grotesque), is attributed morally to the bourgeoisie (the skill of putting on shows and machinations). Whereas the proletariat, the antagonist class, is presented as 'truth', as 'real', and is called upon – as an alien body – to burst *into* the representation, disturb its order and produce its collapse (cf. the very explicit appearance of a title, 'The comedy has misfired', after the bourgeois fail to retake the National Guard's artillery). Conversely, when the workers occupy the stage in their turn, it is not as actors ('actors' being a pejorative connotation here), masks and sham, but as *figures who really die*,[16] a contrary arrangement involving in these sequences the obligatory production of the traumatizing effects of more-than-real.

The result of this configuration (the opposition between a class characterized by its 'artifice' and another validated by its 'naturalness') is that instead of a mass of overdetermining contradictions where this opposition would appear as the 'invested' effect (therefore affecting the two parties present), we find a schematic, dualistic flattening out (artifice and lies versus truth and naturalness), and hence a Manichaean reduction that transforms the bourgeoisie's 'conventional degree of prodigality' (determined by a historical process that can be analysed in terms of class struggle) into the representation of a conventional prodigality presented as a constituent element of this class, hence naturalized in turn. We thus find set in place an opposition with two terms and a simple, undifferentiated causality, proceeding according to a mechanistic materialist conception of movement by augmentation, diminution, repetition, with no consideration of the productive origins of the process (its 'source', its 'motive', which alone can explain the 'leaps', the 'break in succession' (Lenin)). A non-dialectical (internal/external) causality. The opposition of two terms posited as symmetrical represses the fundamental contradiction in this confrontation. What is at issue here (and it goes far beyond the specific problem of *The New Babylon*, as we shall find elsewhere) is the problem of a 'dialectical materialist theory' of *énonciation* in signifying practices; we can thus see that the inscription of the process of production can absolutely not be reduced to the exhibition of the *means of production* alone (non-dissimulation of the *écriture* apparatus, designation and reduplication of the process, insistence on the processes of manufacture); in other words, it cannot be reduced to a simple 'reversal' of the effacement of the work characteristic of idealist aesthetics, but implies the re-marking of the formative process of *every effect* of representation, the analysis and deconstruction of the origin of *every figuration* on the basis of its 'origin' (which is not an origin, but rather relates to Mallarmé's 'intellectual framework' which 'dissimulates and – holds place – fills the space which isolates the strophes'), according to a mode of writing which cannot be reduced to an insistence upon the 'noisy sphere of the superficial' – even if this mode, in the first, indispensable period, had split up any totalizing 'sphere' and suppressed all theological profundity (all naturalism) in favour of a double surface.

Jean Narboni, Jean-Pierre Oudart
Translated by Randall Conrad

Notes

1 'La fin des années', *Cahiers* 230.
2 Extracts from *The Silent Cinema*, volume I of Lebedev's two-volume history of the Soviet cinema, Moscow, 1947. (Authors' note.)
3 Members of the Factory of the Eccentric Actor, the avant-garde studio theatre founded by Kozintsev and Trauberg in 1921 in Leningrad.
4 Adolphe Thiers (1797–1877), French politician and historian who led the reprisals against the Communards in 1871, a principal target of Marx's *Civil War in France*.

5 Cf. on this point Jacques Derrida's important text 'La mythologie blanche', *Politique*, no. 5. (Authors' note.)

6 First published in *Kino-Zhurnal ARK*, nos. 4–5, 1925, pp. 5–8. A French translation was published in *Cahiers* 220–1.

7 To prove, once more, that a 'historical' novel or film does not exist – that what happens in a novel or a film so designated only takes place within the time and space of its writing/reading – we need only refer to the end of the article by Kozintsev already mentioned. Kozintsev explains that, when he saw his film again in 1958, he was tempted to make changes to it, adding a sequence here, taking out a shot there. Finally he gave up. Why? 'And it could all have been done so simply. . . . Then I began to think about it. The whole film would undoubtedly have improved. . . . Only one thing, it seemed to me, would disappear *from* the film. *The epoch*. And so I didn't seek permission to remake it.'(Our emphases.) (Authors' note.)

8 On the problems of the rise to consciousness in Pudovkin and Eisenstein, see 'Montage', *Cahiers* 210 [Ch. 1 in this volume]. (Authors' note.)

9 'More-than-real' are the effects of materiality, the cracked, muddy boots, the rain and mud that becomes physically one with defeated Paris ('order reigns'), floods, the inverse of the image of an 'assault on heaven', i.e. the Commune, the working women, etc. Kozintsev writes: 'Painted in heavy blacks and bright whites, like birds of ill omen, there stood the uniformed men. . . . A ghostly, fantastic, feverish world stood before me; *it was alive, it had become a reality. The non-existent world existed.*' (Our emphasis.) (Authors' note.)

10 We can also say that the 'third term' in *The New Babylon* is split and re-marks a contradiction that is unproductive, or about to be productive ('Jean, we'll meet again in our Paris!'), after a passage through defeat, death, burial. Gerassimov/the shop-girl/the peasant: in their paradigmatic opposition these three characters indicate the contradiction which causally justifies the death of the Commune and delineates its (signifying) logic – the peasant digs the grave of the shop-girl and symbolically buries the object of his fantasy (the desire for revolution). Cf. the way in which the proletariat/peasantry split is re-marked on the film's sexual scene (each term is the object 'a' for the other, inaccessible unless it be across a gaping grave, in an imaginary historical future). (Authors' note.)

11 Which confers an ambiguous status on the grave-digging: who will the tomb really *serve*? The scene very precisely inscribes the peasant (linkage, framing, movement) *like* the two condemned Communards who appear before him: cf. also the metaphor of those who only half-make the revolution and so only dig their own graves. Which we may interpret, given Jean's *divided* character, as those of whom only a *half* makes the revolution. (Authors' note.)

12 Hence we are often given an exposition characterized by varied and complex temporalities, the setting into play of a *signification;* for example, the following sentences which in concentrated form bring in the conditional, the present, the future and the future perfect: 'If the Commune were defeated, the struggle would only be postponed. The principles of the Commune are eternal and cannot be destroyed; they will always be placed on the agenda anew, as long as the working class has not won its freedom.' These are effects of declaration, insistence, repetition and afterthought, which may be related to Lacan's remarks on the anticipations/retrospections in which the subject's history is formed, and to the evanescent nature of the signifier: 'What is realized in my

history is not the past historic of what it was since it is no more, nor even the perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future perfect of what I shall have been for what I am becoming.' Or: 'Where it was. . . . Let us take advantage of the distinct imperfect it offers. Where it was at that very moment, where it was a little, between this extinguishing that still glows and this blossoming that fades, I can come to being from disappearing out of my "spoken".' Or again: 'Placing it in the moment before: it was there and is there no longer, but also in the moment after: it was there a little more from having been able to be there – what there was disappears from being no longer anything but a signifier.' (Authors' note.)

13 'Then Paris was harried by the frantic anti-republican demonstration of the Rural Assembly . . . Desmarets, the gendarme, was decorated for the treacherous, butcher-like chopping up of the high-souled and chivalrous Flourens. . . . Nothing more horrid than that monkey (Thiers), allowed for a time to give full fling to his tigerish instincts, as foreseen by Voltaire. . . . While tearing to pieces the living body of the proletariat . . .' etc. (Marx, *The Civil War in France.*) (Authors' note.)

14 In notes appended to his third German edition of 1891, Engels cites the Paris correspondent of the London *Daily News* (8 June 1871): 'A mounted officer pointed out to General Gallifet a man and a woman for some particular offence. The woman, rushing out of the ranks, threw herself on her knees, and, with outstretched arms, protested her innocence in passionate terms. The General waited for a pause, and then with most impassible face and unmoved demeanour, said, "Madame, I have visited every theatre in Paris, your acting will have no effect on me." ' (Authors' note.)

15 Marx, *Capital*, Book I, part VII, chapter XXIV. (Authors' note.)

16 'The Paris of M. Thiers was not the real Paris of the "vile multitude", but a phantom Paris . . . considering the civil war but an agreeable diversion, eyeing the battle going on through telescopes, counting the rounds of cannon, and swearing by their own honour and that of their prostitutes, that the performance was far better got up than it used to be at the Porte St. Martin. The men who fell were really dead; the cries of the wounded were cries in good earnest; and, besides, the whole thing was so intensely historical.' (Marx, *The Civil War in France.*) And Kozintsev writes: 'A ghostly, fantastic, feverish world stood before me; it was alive, it had become a reality. The non-existent world existed. It was real life, yet there was no photographic naturalism about it.' (Authors' note.)

19 Jean-Pierre Oudart: 'A Lacking Discourse'

('Un discours en défaut', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 232, October 1971)

With our present historical and critical perspective on the 'classical' cinema and the possibility we have of constructing a theoretical model of its *écriture* (as a first step to analyses which would then allow a more rigorous definition of its multiple determinations, their interaction, variations and transformations – in other words, the writing of its history), it is also becoming possible to elaborate a critical apparatus with which we can analyse an increasingly coherent body of contemporary films for which even a highly empirical approach reveals a number of thematic and stylistic recurrences. The main problem which will concern us here is that of the scenographic inscription of 'classical' (Hollywood) cinema and contemporary (European) cinema.

We shall therefore begin from several elements of a *yet to be constructed* model of the *écriture* of classical cinema, in an attempt, once we have examined these recurrences in a number of contemporary films (those whose first common factor is a fictional axis provided by a particular character – usually a child), to point out the determinations of these films, to constitute them as a system, and to consider the impasse of this system.

In response to a common demand from the spectator who is in a position of ideological (not political) break in relation to bourgeois institutions, practices and ethics, that he should see himself confirmed in that position, these films are conceived in such a way that this spectator receives their discourse as *the effect of his own fantasies of break*. They all therefore very systematically practice a discursive strategy which consists of prompting the spectator himself to posit in ideological terms what they do not inscribe in social and political terms, even though their fiction refers precisely to real and contemporary social practice: namely, the position of break which their fiction produces as the effect of a violent, irreducible antagonism between one character and the rest, but for which any dialectical inscription in terms of overdetermination is suspended (see my article on *Le souffle au coeur*, whose problematic the present article takes up, and see also Serge Daney's article on *The Go-Between*, several points of which he develops in the same direction).[1]

'Classical' Hollywood cinema

Among the thematic and scriptural constants identifiable in Hollywood films, let us *in terms of strategy* note the following:

a All the characters can occupy the same place in a shot (i.e. have the right to the same presence), share the same shot (be collectively present), respond to each other from one shot to the next (see and understand one another in the same way, fictively constitute an ocular and linguistic community).
b They are generally caught up in an antagonistic relationship which is resolved by the elimination of some of them by the rest. This elimination consists in the former being driven out by the latter from a *particular frame* whose possession they dispute (a scene, a house, a territory).
c The moral determinations of each group are visually evident, figured once and for all by the physical personality of the actors.

In other words:

1 It is in the moment of their confrontation that the causes and justifications of their antagonism are inscribed and defined.
2 The terrain of their confrontation, often given as its *stake*, is defined as an *inalienable value* of the same standing as the institution whose ecological support it constitutes (the house/the family, the fort/the regiment).
3 The characters are not generally susceptible to transformations, either mutual (except by force) or by the intervention of other characters (the cast of characters being constituted once and for all).

In very schematic terms, it might be said that the thematic of Hollywood fiction (of the Western in particular) relates directly to the dominant contradictions between American society's economic practices and its ideological systems (the practice of competition and the ideology of free enterprise, and the egalitarian humanism imprinted in its other institutions); and that Hollywood fiction resolves these contradictions on the imaginative level by *displacing* their field (the company/the family, the couple) – the agents and the effects – from the economic to the sexual, in order finally to suppress them in favour of the assertion of the ideological community of the characters.

The ideological community of Hollywood characters is supported by the inscription of an antagonism from which reference to the practice and the economic ideology of free enterprise has been suppressed. This antagonism is thus reinscribed in erotic terms (sexual competition), the finality of the fiction (the assertion of the community) implying in return the suppression of the sexual.

Example 1: in Fred Niblo's *The Temptress* (1926), Greta Garbo vamps and ruins a French banker, abandons her husband, falls in love with a dam-builder, excites the jealousy of another man who sabotages the dam; and after several years of forgetting each other, the engineer and the heroine are finally reunited at the inauguration of the reconstructed dam (in a scene which is no longer erotic).

Example 2: Ford's *Iron Horse* (1926) tells the story of the *joining* of two sections of a railway line, delayed by the sabotage of a traitor motivated by erotic jealousy. The fiction's gain is explicitly no more than the expected reunion of two groups, already defined as belonging to the same community, sealed by the disappearance of a character who postpones it only the better to confirm its existence.

It may seem strange that a humanizing film criticism has found constant nourishment in the Western, and that it sees the culmination of the Western's 'humanism' in scenes featuring a duel to the death. But the analysis of the symbolic determination of western scenography reinscribed by classical direction now allows us to understand better how the effects of representation can culminate in scenes of extreme violence, and even gloss over death itself; and how, solely by the effect of *succession* in shots linked by a look, these effects can make the antagonists share in an ideological community which depends solely on the symbolic inscription of the direction. The contradictory effect of the *écriture* of Hollywood direction, which has to be understood if the ideological impact of the Western is to be at all intelligible, derives in fact from the way that, through the rule of the succession of shots, the ocular relation between antagonists binds together the ideological community of these free representatives, equal in their right to presence; and from the fact that, thanks to that presence, the relation at the same time allows the indetermination of the antagonism, the lack of inscription of the characters' references, to be glossed over, to the point of making the Indians, for example, no more than the objects of a more or less eroticized fantasy of aggression.

This allows us to posit, for working purposes, a double correlation:

1 between on the one hand the ideological valorization of the exchange of looks (and speech) sealed by the rule of the succession of shots, and on the other the function as lever of the fiction of the character who, through his transgression (breaking his word, treachery), finally affirms the existence of the community, has a place in the fiction only for the purpose of binding the community together;

2 between the reference, inscribed in terms of suppression, to the ideology and effects of free enterprise, as an ennobling dispute over territory and the threat of a group being split up, and the suppressed inscription of the sexual, which allows the resolution of both: the ideological enemies are turned into eroticized aggressors, objects 'a' capable of being made to

disappear at any given moment, and the internal troubles are resolved by a generalized castration.

It might be said, then, that in these fictions the ideological community of the characters is built on the supposition of the economic determinations of their referents, and that its inscription is supported by a symbolic economy of the discourse such that *the same* mise en scène *allows both the actualizing of the community and the elimination of the bearers of contradictions without their leaving any trace; inasmuch as their purely ideological inscription makes credible enough their position as disappearing levers of a fiction which in effacing its production at the same time annuls the effects of the Manichaeanism which it sets in motion.*

Modern European cinema

In connection with these elements, and bearing in mind the very general correlations thus established, we can now fairly easily isolate several constant factors in a number of European films, occasionally produced in reaction to certain Hollywood stylistic norms and certain of their ideological effects. These films (for example, those of Bresson, *L'enfance nue*, *Kes*, *L'enfant sauvage*, *Le souffle au coeur*, *The Go-Between*, to cite those already discussed in this magazine) have in common a fictional axis which is usually provided by a child grappling against a series of characters with whom the child's relationship is one of violent incomprehension. This character does not fight on equal terms with the others: always explicitly presented as 'underdeveloped' in relation to them (economically, intellectually, sexually), he manages to gain an advantage over them *on ground other* than their own, and he also has the resource of escaping them by taking flight (a constant recourse in this fiction).

Let us begin by noting, in relation to what has just been said, that:

1 One of the ideological pre-texts of these films is often the impossibility of communicating, the impossibility of integrating into some community. Still obeying classical norms, the *écriture* of these films inscribes incomprehension as its major signified, in various modalities. It may be, as in Bresson, a question of mutual non-recognition of desire; of linguistic incomprehension (Truffaut): or of a different style of social behaviour, determined by the fact that the characters belong to different social classes (Losey), etc.
2 At first presented ideologically, this lack of communication gives rise to a fictional inscription of flight-pursuit which indeed inscribes the child's relation to the other characters as *impossible*. The protagonists never encounter each other on the same ground, since within the fiction their relation has neither a definite stake nor an object recognized by both groups. In comparison with Hollywood cinema, it may therefore be said that these fictions consist of relations such that both the roles of the

various characters and the objects which govern their linguistic, economic and erotic relations are subject to constant *splits* and *perversions* of their referential status and function (e.g. Truffaut's role in *L'enfant sauvage,* money in Bresson's films, etc.).
3 No progress is made in relations. Instead, there is a repetitive series of equivalent scenes at the conclusion of which the child is still not integrated (Hollywood fiction, in contrast, resolves antagonisms, annuls differences, stabilizes situations, etc.).

It is undoubtedly within the inscription of the relation of the child to the rest as impossible that the determinations of these films are established. They are generally *traumatizing,* and explicitly produced with the aim of producing such an effect of traumatism. We need to establish a correlation between the inscription of the relation as impossible and the effect of traumatism resulting from it in order to understand how what instigates the one also determines the other.

It is not so much in the cruel or scandalous content of the referential situations evoked by the fiction that the reasons for what traumatizes the spectator are to be sought, but rather in the fact that their inscription prohibits the spectator from taking charge of the situations in the course of reading the film, from articulating them with the system of defences, prohibitions, moral and political demands which would allow either the productive development of the contradiction or its repression.

The traumatic effect proceeds precisely from the *lack* of inscription of these situations: the lack may occur in a discourse which seeks ideologically to repress the contradiction (or contradictions) which it poses as having its effect on the level of the real (which is what Hollywood cinema does by bringing in the intervention of the real institution which is supposed to reabsorb the contradictions – the family, the army, the prevailing locations of the effects of their referential social framework and of free enterprise, inscribed in the mode of repression, and reabsorbed in the course of the film); or it may occur in a discourse which politically exploits these situations by practising the analysis of the contradiction determining them on the level of the real, in other words the actual contradictions present in the institutions and practices to which these situations refer.

The Bressonian model

Bresson is undoubtedly the director who in all his films has most rigorously, and on the basis of the most openly avowed ideological positions, attempted the inscription of this impossible relation. He is also one of the first post-war directors to have defined his practice as a break with Hollywood cinema.

In his films, a solitary character rejects communication, an economic relation, or a sexual relation, in the name of a categorical refusal to be defined in terms of social status by the other characters, or to be transformed into an object of desire. Each time, the demand for love, or the mystical desire for something else, formed by this character constitutes the cause of the refusal and the quest thus precipitated; in other words this is the lever that sets the fiction in motion.

Moreover, the filmic inscription of Bressonian characters follows three constants:

1 They are generally inscribed neither full-figure nor in close medium shot, but *fragmented.*
2 The film's discourse always designates them as objects of another's look, the cutting off of their body by the frame thus connoting their fictive position as objects for the others.
3 They do not generally share the same shot.

The Bressonian hero and heroine are thus designated in the discourse of the film as objects of the look (the desire) of others, irreducible, however, to the look of the spectator in this imaginary position because, in the imaginary scenography involved in the relation of the spectator to the character, their look establishes them as real-fictive.

It is thanks to the eye that the Bressonian character avoids the position of being an object for the other characters. The refutation of this position of object is in fact the end towards which the Bressonian fiction works. It requires setting up, within the filmic discourse, the *effect of production* of the character as real in the scenography (the look), or in other words *the mystical connotation of the signifier which inscribes the character* (the eye). The ideological effects of Bressonian cinema (the spiritual choice of its protagonists) are thus produced by setting up a signifier (the eye) continually in excess in relation to the effects of the fictive designation, by means of the look of the other characters at a privileged character – a designation which, through a re-marking of the scenography which supports its fiction (subjective close-ups) itself produces a re-marking of the ideological effects of that scenography. As real-fictive, the representative *transcends* the fictional effects of the designation as object (as a desirable body, or even as a social figure already typed by the iconography) all the more for being further fragmented. Hence the fact that even without the inscription of the eyes, Bressonian cinema automatically produces ideological effects determined by the anchoring of the metaphysical connotation of the representation.

But Bresson is not content with just taking advantage of these effects of connotation. In *writing* his films, he creates a series of 'partial objects' (sex, words, money, completely interchangeable in *Une femme douce*) for which his characters refuse the quality of exchange currency in their love relations because they are always unequal to their demand. Hence the flight-pursuit between the appeal to voyeurism and its prohibition which Bresson's *mise en scène* sets up through the interference of the meaning effects of the discourse held by the characters on their mutual relations (almost always, moreover, in direct reference to real situations), and through the interference of the metaphysical connotations of the scenography that are reactivated (actualized) by these effects. The whole of Bresson's art consists in fact of *diverting these effects of meaning* (prohibiting an active reading of the overdetermination of the relations between characters by reference to the determinations of their specific referents) *to the advantage of these connotations,* without his ever effecting their reinscription, in other words without ever referring literally to the coded vehicles which support them. (There is no reinscription of the scenography in Bresson.) That is, he diverts the spectator from the real references of the fictional situations in order to make him fantasize over the neurotic ideological stereotypes actualized by means of this diversion. The films cited above also set in motion, in more varied fictional registers, a signifying strategy which produces similar ideological effects. That is, the inscription of these effects is at the same time also supported by the reciprocal interaction of several elements:

1 a scenography discreetly underlined, exclusively along the lines of its traditional metaphysical effects (systematic accentuation of depth of field in *The Go-Between, L'enfant sauvage, Kes,* etc.),
2 a systematic suspension of the (linguistic, economic, sexual) relations of the hero with the other characters;
3 the inscription, *within this suspension,* of effects of scene or of other effects of meaning obtained by the diversion of the inscription of the determinations of the hero (which are initially inscribed in reference to real situations) in favour of the ideological and neurotic valorization of the position of break installed by the suspension between this character and the rest.

The problem is knowing what this suspension consists of (what are the references of the fictional situation in which it is produced); and what constitutes the ideological effect *already expected* to complete it, the completion itself consisting in the replacing of the lacking or suppressed analysis of the real contradictions to which the situation of this suspension refers by the ideological and neurotic valorization of its real effects.

The inscription and the ideological functioning of all these films implies an initial positioning by the film-maker of an opposition between at least two terms, an opposition which, in the final analysis, ideologically governs his discourse (in Bresson, the opposition between erotic desire and neurotic claim to the Christian ideals of the person, assimilated into the demand for love); its inscription is such that the actualization of its effects, which forms the ideological message of the film, is always obtained by:

1 the implication of the real references of one of the terms (there is no reference to Christian institutions and practices in the films of Bresson), by means of fictional situations and stereotypes, and the specific (for

example scenographic) codes of the connotation effects which allow the spectator to name what is not described or denotated in the fiction: scenographic effects, natural framing, 'Jansenist' interiors, rarefied sounds, actor-types, etc.

2 the inscription of the other so that his or her suspension (the avoidance of the actualization of the erotic relation in Bresson) creates an effect of contradiction between, on the one hand, the evocation of the referential situations of these suspended relations (referential situations which may be personal or make up a cliché of the times: the cult of the nymphet in Bresson, Rohmer, etc.), and on the other hand what, at the very moment of the suspension of the relation, is actualized as the connotation effect of the scene through the very fact of the suspension of the relations inscribed in it, and through the dislocation introduced between a recognition of the real references of the situation and an appeal to ideological references capable of 'saving' the situation by idealizing it, of supplying the imaginary fulfilment of the real frustration it evokes, or of denying any direct allusion to the fantasies or real experiences at the source of its inscription.

The connotation occurs, then, as if by chance, obscuring the real references of these situations (whether it is a question of fantasies or actual experiences): neither Bresson nor Truffaut holds or will ever hold any effective discourse on their relations with their actors or on the situations outside the film to which they might refer if they so wished.

But it is above all through the effects of the character's privileged position (his or her place in the scenography, the ideological valorization of his or her real referent: children, young girls, etc.) that these connotative effects create a genuine distortion between the *excess* that privileged position inscribes in the economy of the fiction this figure sets in motion, and the *lack* of inscription of his or her relations with the other characters.

By lack should be understood:

a greater poverty by comparison with the surrounding characters (*Kes, Mouchette*), a state of virginity contrasting with the violence of the situations or the age of the erotic partners (Bresson's young girls), a psychological and intellectual immaturity (*L'enfant sauvage*), ridiculous clothes and a social awkwardness denoted as the style of a social class (*The Go-Between*), etc.

And by excess:

greater knowledge, or rather a knowledge different from that of the others (*Kes*), greater speed (*L'enfant sauvage*), greater sensitivity (*Mouchette*), etc.

While the connotation obscures the real references of the fictional situations, and while it stops the spectator from referring to them, even when the film's referential material appears to be made up of real social and sexual situations (contemporary in *Kes*, historical and carefully reconstructed in *The Go-Between*), its principal effect is almost always *an ideological proposition in the form of opposition* which institutes the fiction's privileged protagonist as irreducible to his or her determinations in the fiction; in other words, as implicitly irreducible to what remains ideologically defined as a fictional situation with direct reference to a real social or sexual situation. That is to say, in these films the real reference of the fictional situations is politically glossed over (by the lack of inscription of their determinations in reality), but 'aesthetically' preserved, by the filmic discourse's effects of transparency and transitivity, as in Hollywood cinema. *But it is not preserved to the same ideological ends,* nor primarily in the same ideological context, as that of Hollywood cinema: from one historical epoch and one society to another, the image has passed from the status of the real to the status of a counterpart (*false-counterpart*). And the whole ideological discourse of these films also profits from this transformation which they do not inscribe.

The real and the counterpart

Where the references of Hollywood fiction are principally social institutions and normal experiences, and ideological discourses on one and the other occur within the framework of a society in which the struggles generated by the relations of production were not as yet reflected or politically oriented in terms of class struggle, those of modern European cinema are usually marginal institutions and 'deviant' practices, and ideological-neurotic fantasies entertained on the subject by their producers, who work in societies where these struggles are reflected and oriented in terms of class struggle.

It is no doubt still too soon to claim much of an advance in this theoretical direction, but we can already posit a causal relation between:

1 the transparency of a cinematic discourse producing the idealized representation [*mise en scène*] of a society's institutions, and the fact that its producers did not claim a position of breaking away (and, correlatively, did not inscribe in their products any trace of their work);
2 and on the other hand, breaking away from this cinematic practice and its 'bourgeois' connotations, the European 'New Wave' film-makers' inscription of numerous traces of their work of production, one aspect of which was the recourse to various iconic practices banished from Hollywood *mise en scène;* in particular, in the political context of their work, their use of publicity posters has to be related to their taking up of class positions. There is historically a correlation between the attack on bourgeois imagery, the European directors' break with the norms of Hollywood cinema, the inscription of advertising images in films for the purpose of political attack on an imagery henceforth connoted as a false-counterpart, the justification of a specific iconic practice in reference to other iconic practices, etc., and the use of images as caricatures and signatures.

It is clear that this transformation subsequently gave birth to filmic practices of diverse theoretical and political orientation.

Nevertheless, the films under consideration here (and even more so a film like *The Conformist*, which amalgamates the body of their effects into a counterpart of a political discourse) drew maximum profit from the confusion that still reigns today between the henceforth political connotation of bourgeois representation as a false-counterpart and the 'artistic' recuperation of signifying production (reduced to its value of signature) by film-makers who have made an ideological, political and aesthetic break with classical cinema. All the more so since the *écriture* of these films in fact preserves the classical cinema's effects and its ideology of transparence and transitivity by installing a confusion between the connotation of bourgeois representation and its real social referent (the bourgeois) as a false-counterpart, thus reducing the productive effects of their work (the inscription of iconic references) to a reduplication of the discourse held on these real referents in accordance with the norms of classical cinema (cf., again, *The Conformist*).

The effects of this connotation, and of the confusion between the figures and the references, are *supported and maintained* by the inscription in a privileged position of the film's protagonist, who escapes the former while sustaining the latter inasmuch as he is inscribed by the film-maker as the messenger of his ideological claim to a break, and inasmuch as the spectator neurotically fantasizes himself in the protagonist's role.

Le souffle au coeur for example was chosen by the 'leftist' Paris critics as a violent political film by an *effect* of *discourse* whose success confirms, and to an extent explains, the effects produced by all those other films: the privileged position of the protagonist induces the spectator to take his desires for reality (to be that other, to exist in the place of the character who imaginarily occupies the place of the real in the representation); to take the film for the reality of that other (the succession of bourgeois stereotypes which become the real bourgeoisie); and to deduce the real political import of the film from the oppression he experiences on being confronted by this representation, which oppresses him because that is all he sees, because he fantasizes himself in the role of the witness-actor of the fiction which he sets in motion.

The ideological success of all these films derives from the fact that their discourse, the economy of their fiction, contrives for the spectator the place of the 'real', designated for him by the character with whom he identifies and who himself designates, through a perpetual escape towards something else, his marginal position in relation to all the other figures; a real other than the reality which the fiction seems nevertheless to assign to the character (that of the real determinations of his referent and of the referents of the other figures). By *monopolizing* in this way the place that in Hollywood cinema may be occupied by all the characters in turn (successively) – the foreground of the scene – the privileged character of these films is inscribed in an ideologically, politically, and neurotically overdetermined transformation of the fictional system whose scriptural norms (transparency and transitivity) he nevertheless sustains. As the residue of a fiction which relates directly to the practices of real society, as surplus and marginal there, he is connoted as its spiritual supplement (Bresson, Truffaut), as the bearer of its revolutionary hopes (the child in *Kes*), etc. And on this basis he occupies the foreground of the scene (which in *The Conformist* is inscribed as no less than that of history) across which pass the actors of a drama *he generally does not understand*, which does not concern him even when it affects him (*The Go-Between, Le souffle au coeur*), but where his look gives the spectator the illusion of unravelling the truth and exposing its false-counterparts. The ideological gain of this *écriture* is in effect this: to reduce the experiences of the characters of the fiction, merged with those of their referents, to false-counterparts, and to designate (expose, define) them as such without any discourse on the determinations of the referents and without questioning the determinations of the connotations of these figures.

Translated by Joseph Karmel

Note

1 Oudart's article on *Le souffle au coeur* is in *Cahiers* 230, July 1971; Daney's article on *The Go-Between* is in *Cahiers* 231, August–September 1971.

20 *Cahiers du Cinéma:* 'Cinema, Ideology, Politics (for Poretta-Terme)'

('Cinéma, idéologie, politique (pour Poretta-Terme)', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 232, October 1971)

This text served as Cahiers' *presentation for the Poretta-Terme conference – 2–10 October – on political cinema.*

> What services does the proletariat expect of intellectuals?
> 1 That they smash bourgeois ideology.
> The bourgeoisie's interests are laid bare by the corrosive action of the method of historical materialism. Ideological fellow-travellers are paralysed. The class struggle is intensified.
> 2 That they study the forces which 'make things move'. In non-revolutionary situations above all, a revolutionary intellectual class can assure the endurance of the revolution.
> 3 That they advance pure theory . . .
>
> B. Brecht

> We are today living through, not a 'crisis of civilization' as bourgeois ideology endlessly asserts, but simply – that is, with increasing difficulty and obviousness – the simultaneous phase of the apogee, overturning and dismantling of the capitalist mode of production. In the ever-growing and intensifying confrontation between imperialism and socialism, this means dialectically, at the level of the superstructures, an ever more 'profound' challenging of the modes of signification.
>
> Philippe Sollers

The pairing of the words 'cinema' and 'politics', which has recently sparked heated debates, does not in itself have any real pertinence. The two terms cannot be thought of together without a scientific interrogation of the articulation and the dialectical interpenetration of two heterogeneous and differently located fields of superstructure – the field of *politics* and, within the field of *ideology*, the specific role of *signifying practices*. Without such an interrogation, which can only be undertaken from the point of view of historical materialism and dialectical materialism, we shall necessarily remain in the domain of empiricism, impressionism, anarchism and, definitively, eclecticism or ideological dogmatism. The resultant political fall-out can only play into the hands of the dominant class and of the capitalist system, whose reproduction at the level of superstructures is, as we know, linked to the 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (Althusser), of which cinema is an integral part.

The Ideological State Apparatuses are at the same time a stake and a locus of the class struggle. Long after the seizure of political power by the proletariat, bourgeois ideology, the dominant ideology, may continue to dominate through the functioning of these Apparatuses. The class struggle within the superstructure thus has as its principal aspect the *ideological struggle* against all forms (philosophical and 'artistic', among others) of bourgeois ideology. Now, bourgeois ideology proceeds under cover: its class discourse does not acknowledge itself as such. It can adopt different forms, in particular, in the area of cinema and politics, that of progressivism, at least a progressivism of 'content' that does not get at what is essential, which is the modification of the relation between spectators and the conditions in which they see a film (to the extent that spectators as a whole are, first, divided into antagonistic classes and, secondly, fail to understand this antagonism because of the treatment of questions of class as questions of spectacle). Now that Hollywood is confirming its irreversible decomposition, any film with 'left' political pretensions that does not attempt to accelerate this process of decomposition in a regulated and rigorous manner,and that under the pretext of 'reaching the largest possible audience' (but who would this 'majority' be?) leaves Hollywood forms intact (they are not merely 'formal' but thoroughly ideological) – any such film, 'progressive' or not, has every chance of playing into the hands of the dominant ideology. Noble intentions, a 'left-wing' label, the progressive 'content' of a film are not, today, in 1971, in Europe, relevant ideological/political criteria for the work of ideological subversion and deconstruction that is required by the historical moment in which we live. Equally, the hotchpotch of forms, the impatient and 'savage' destructiveness, the attempts at creating a void characteristic of much 'marginal' cinema, are also not the answer.

What is involved, through patient, methodical, difficult work, is to exert pressure on the principal articulations of the system through which bourgeois cinema, which is to say principally and decisively the cinema of Hollywood, is constituted. This system, whose development and power of assimilation coincided historically with the development of capitalism, is in its broadest sense one of 'Representation' – in other words, the preeminence and the illusory 'reality', or transcendence, of 'content' (the signified) over its (signifying) *production,* this being true of all social practices (philosophical, 'artistic', etc.) having the production of meaning as their sphere of operation. The mechanical production of an illusion of 'reality' in the case of cinema constitutes a threshold of this ideology. Among other tasks of the ideological struggle (and we insist on the term *ideological,* because it is of capital importance for a correct strategy not to squeeze together the ideological and political levels), the theoretical and practical deconstruction of the specific hold of Representation on the cinema is therefore an essential point – is, in 1971, in Europe, a principal task.

This comes down to saying that (1) to conduct a political analysis of a film from the point of view of its 'content' alone or of its political label is to conceal the specific role of ideology in the social whole and the retroactive effect of the superstructure on the economic infrastructure; (2) in a film, *an important aspect of ideological functioning can be, historically, the displacement that the film operates upon an apparently 'formal' mechanism*. What comes to be determined as 'formal' is not the exterior shape, or the 'expression', of which the ideological (or political) 'content' would be what is expressed, the intentional focus. What is presented as 'formal' is thoroughly ideological, and thus has secondary political effects.

But work in ideology, the ideological struggle, for which cinema is a strategic area and which (let us insist) does not have the same conditions as political struggle, is long-term work. For this reason it is profoundly naive, a naiveté that belongs to idealism, to spontaneity, to accuse for example the Dziga Vertov group (Godard/Gorin) of not stirring anyone to 'make the revolution', as we have frequently heard and seen in print. In fact this expression of bad faith, which reconciles anarchist leftism and the cinephile's 'apoliticism' in a love of classical/Hollywood cinema, barely conceals a sure confusion, the confusion of the petit bourgeois *divided* between his desire to enjoy freely the dominant ideology's 'cultural' products and his wish (neurotic, hysterical) to eliminate that ideology directly, without strategy. In this type of reaction we can clearly see the specific role of the ideological plane in the class struggle, and the importance of formal/ideological subversion in a film, including films in which a political subject is paramount.

This confusion, which results in judging such texts, such films, as 'unreadable' and 'delirious', is that of the dominant ideology, of bourgeois knowledge, which sees itself deprived, in a specific domain of the superstructure, of *symbolic guarantees* (T. Herbert, 'Pour une théorie générale des idéologies', *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*,no. 9) that preserve the neurotic coherence (a coherence wrought by a repression that is not contemplated) of its discourse, through which this bourgeois ideology believes it controls any excesses that menace the economy it represents (principally the political excess of the class struggle).

As for ourselves, we present here two of those avant-garde films reputed to be today, in 1971, 'delirious', 'unreadable'. *Othon*, by Jean-Marie Straub, works on the classical space of representation – the space of the classical *theatre*, from which it is wrongly assumed that the cinema is 'liberated' – in a play, a political play, by Corneille; this work remains misunderstood and repressed. *Luttes en Italie*, by Jean-Pierre Gorin (Dziga Vertov group), far from being content to convey political meanings according to the imperatives of the system of film exhibition, interrogates within its own production, within its very texture, the ideological role of the chain of images/sounds, playing with them dialectically. These two films, over and above their differences, through the *rigour* and the *difficulty* which they dare to demand of themselves and which they invite the spectator to confront, show up the paltriness of the whole of contemporary production. Nagisa Oshima's *The Ceremony*, on the other hand, while apparently constructed according to the norms of classical dramatic cinema, requires through the complexity and above all the *systematization* of its fiction (whose *mise en scène*, moreover, is also dialectically articulated by a 'theatrical' space) a non-linear, vertical reading, according to the double play of this fiction on juxtaposed scenes of sex and political history.

Finally, *La Vie est à nous*, *New Babylon*, and *One Sixth of the World*, by Renoir, Kozintsev and Trauberg, and Vertov, respectively, are not presented as pieces from a museum of revolutionary cinema, but as points of reference that are still contemporary for a materialist theory and practice of a cinema operating in the field of the specific contradiction: film/politics.

Translated by Alan Williams

21 Pascal Bonitzer: 'Off-screen Space'

('Hors-champ: un espace en défaut', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 234–5, December 1971–January–February 1972)

1 *True, false*

The automatic ideological action which inaugurates our viewing of a film, our experience of the projection, is to invest the *surface* of the screen with a fictive *depth*. This depth denotes the reality within the fiction, the reality of the fiction. This ideological engagement is more imperative in the cinema than in any other signifying operation. It is what we call 'the impression of reality'.

Surface, depth, reality, fiction, any process by which we read a film – that is, any critical procedure tending to lift the repression of the surface from its configuration in depth, to recall to us the fictiveness of the fiction – is from the outset caught in a chiasmus, in the stranglehold of an antinomy from which it seems impossible to escape. For this reason the critical viewing of cinema emerges as a dissociation from the filmic object; it analyses while continuing to 'live' the fiction – a cleavage of the subject. Thus we often find ourselves trying to work out how a trick effect was achieved while at the same time being taken in by it. We often question the 'authenticity' of a costume,[1] criticize the actor 'behind' the character, wonder whether a background is or is not a back-projection, ask ourselves about the cost of a production, and so on, in a generalized process of split with the filmic scene.

This critical 'pulling back' seems very much a defence against 'the impression of reality', against the power of assertion with which we credit the cinema. It is a defence to the extent that the action is tied to, even alienated from, the 'realism' of detail, decor, etc. supporting the 'verisimilitude' of the narrative, with which classical cinema is obsessed. It is most often in the name of something more-than-real that this 'pulling back' takes place; the concern for the 'real' (the true, the authentic, the natural, etc.) in representation is by definition never satisfied. The 'real' constitutes the ideological limit around which criticism circulates, the reading – divided and blocked between neurotic hesitation and the turnstile of fetishism (denial), where the paradigms of the 'true' and the 'false' alternate. This alternation of 'judgement', the blockage of the reading and its flow – its productivity – summarily defines the mechanism of spec(tac)ular interception. 'Keeping a distance' is a necessary moment in representation, one which allows us to anticipate, tolerate and overcome failures in 'credibility'.

Naturally, this holds for any film (the majority) which depends on the verisimilitude of the narrative and on the realism of detail (the one being dependent on the other: here *realism* denotes the level of the signifier, *verisimilitude* the level of the signified); that is, any film which plays the game of a representative scene.[2]

If you now place a spectator who is used to this type of film in front of one of those very rare (for obvious ideological reasons) films which do *not* play along with such representation, which throw the scene of the fiction off-centre and chop it up so that the true-false alternation is rendered inoperative, that spectator will 'switch off'. When avant-garde films are accused of not being 'watchable' by the 'mass' of viewers (a group which includes workers, peasants, potential viewers and the 'uninitiated', those excluded from the superstructures), we are *in fact* referring to the mass of petit bourgeois viewers who are addicted to dramatic cinema, to Aristotelian realism, to verisimilitude. The machine having nowhere to turn, the breaking down of this imaginary support produces a kind of emptiness, a blank, which causes anguish to any hysterical attention, and which inaugurates a reading, a process of producing a drifting meaning, prey to 'a continual initiative' (Kristeva), prey to the dialectical play of decisions, overflowing well *beyond* the bounds of the interpretation of a definite object (the particular film). (The petit bourgeois viewer, in contrast, above all does not want to *invent*, to work on the sounds and images. He wants to be satisfied, filled with images. The pleasure of the film-buff is an oral pleasure – he takes 'in' films (the faecal strip) via the eyes. The second stage involves discussing it with himself, erecting a fetish through verbal evacuations: 'a sublime sequence', 'an inspired shot'. The uninterrupted reign of such film-buffery may be over, but it still exists.)

The judgement that 'this is false' (by which I mean any distancing from the fiction on the part of the viewer), which denotes unevennesses and credibility gaps in the flow of the narrative, is thus more or less automatically reinvested in a questioning of the work, the material, the way the direction operates, etc. This is because, in contrast to theatrical or literary fictions, cinematic fiction usually sets in motion a considerable apparatus of snares and tricks, and functions mysteriously. Any break in credibility (the notion refers back to the unity of 'realism' and 'verisimilitude' in fiction) leads us to a question about the signifier, within the suspension of its 'realism' (which effaces its status as signifier). Now, while 'the impression of reality' created by the cinema is, as we know, a very strong one, nevertheless there are always instances when in varying degrees we question it, even in the form of a denial ('I know it's phoney, but I still believe it'), which is also the usual way.

We never succumb absolutely, hypnotically, to the 'reality' of cinema. *The 'impression of reality' is from the start affected by a lack.* What is the source of that lack? First, the fact that all representations are by definition, and more or less, a contestation (and at the same time an instigation) of presence (or reality). But more precisely, it relates to the material structure of the cinematic fiction – to the system of projection, the screen, in broad terms the structure of the filmic *scene*.

If we happen to cast doubt, in a fairly trite way and usually with no risk of pushing it too far, on the 'reality' and 'authenticity' of what the screen offers us, this is because the screen does not show us 'everything'. In other words, the function of the screen is not just to allow us to *see* (the film), but also, as its name indicates, to conceal us (*from* reality). *The cinematic image is haunted by what is not in it.* Contrary to popular opinion, the filmic image is not the imprint and final depository of a unique reality. Characterized by an absence, the filmic image *works* (the *story* makes it work), ingrained with what is not there.

The filmic scene 'plays' and works with what is not there, whether in its dynamics and its diachrony, on the level of the sequence and transition of shots, or in its architectonics and its synchrony, on the level of the frame. We know (cf. Barthes, 'Le Troisième sens', *Cahiers* 222, and *Sade Fourier Loyola*, p. 158) that these two levels are heterogeneous, that they do not overlap, or complement each other, or 'retreat' into each other. They are, however, connected in terms of scenography, inasmuch as the frame (the shot set up as fetish, perversely severed from the living body of the film) retains certain lines of force which, within the dynamic relationships established by classical cinema (matching on the axis and the 30 degrees rule),[3] designate the space of the scene, the *depth* which supports the representation, the classical drama. It is with that fictive depth, within which the signifier is cancelled out, and with the lack of that depth, that we are concerned here.

We are therefore interested in 'what is not there' *in* the filmic image, according to a double register of lack: (1) 'diachronically', *what is between-two-shots*, (2) 'synchronically', what is *out-of-frame*. The out-of-frame gap is of course reduced in the diachronic articulation of the shots. In classical representational cinema this benefits a linear causality, the gap being the place where the cause is rooted, and from which that cause is reflected in its effects (it is this 'reflection' which constitutes the 'reality effect').

2 *Screen space, off-screen space*

For Bazin the out-of-frame space is always just the pure continuum of the real which the screen reveals like a window or a mirror (by cutting up that continuity, but in that very process also 'seizing' it and confirming it). Noël Burch is to our knowledge the first post-war film theoretician to have thought in terms of dynamics ('structures' or (?) 'dialectics', to use Burch's terminology) – the spacing, the between-two-shots, the out-of-frame. In *Praxis du cinéma*, and particularly in one of the very first articles which make up that volume, '*Nana* or the two kinds of space', Burch concerns himself with this little-understood aspect of cinema scenography: the filmic space as a divided space, a lacking space. It is a pity that the empiricism and formalism of Burch's method confines his analysis to a rapidly exhausted description of a few cases of the functioning of 'the other space', to a rather short study of the effects of break and formal manipulation – within a general 'structure' which is itself never investigated (representation) – allowed by the fiction of that latent 'other space'. Burch's empirical approach is reductive, grounded as it is in one of those highly-charged ideological notions of technique, in this case the notion of 'space'.[4] The two spaces are *screen space* and *off-screen space*. According to Burch, dialectical cinema is what 'articulates' these two spaces. In the final analysis, this means disturbing the reference points which centre the scenic space, by playing on the parameters of distance, angles, etc., so that the spectator (and the eye of his imagination) is constantly suspended at the scenographic outline which, from one shot to the next, undermines his confidence in a centred space.

The words 'centred space' are mine. They do not appear in Burch's text. It is clear, however, that all these scenographic manipulations which bring in the function of 'off-screen space' refer to the notion of a centred space, that of the classical stage, theatre in the Italian style, the scenographic *cube*. The cube which guarantees the depth of the surface.

The notion of space necessarily implies that of depth. As a fragment of space circumscribed by the frame and open to the eye, the so-called 'objective' eye which indeed objectifies it and endows it with a substantial reality, *field* always has depth, regardless of whether 'depth of field' is involved. It is wholly comprehensible in terms of the norms of linear perspective.[5] The notion of field, as we know, relates to the classification of shots according to scale; it is therefore part of the same arbitrary process by which the film fragment is rooted in the 'subject'. The 'closer' the shot, we are told, the more 'restricted' the field (for example, Burch, op. cit.). 'Shot' and 'field', as a result of their paradigmatic pairing, regulate the variations in dimension and distance of the object in the frame, for an imaginary eye. They regulate space as a function of that eye, which thereby encloses it. It is this 'enclosing' that constitutes the dimension of depth as the (economic) 'reserve' of a central and sovereign subject, reduced to a pure 'ocular perception', and that defines the space of 'awareness'. That is, of misrecognition.

To the extent that the idea of 'off-screen space' depends on that of screen space [field], it belongs to the system of this misrecognition. Off-screen space is, first, the metonymic region of screen space, of which it is the extension and the imaginary support. In classical cinema a not unimportant aspect of the direction of actors consists of 'animating' the off-screen space by means of the angle and direction of looks within the shot (the axis of looks being displaced in relation to that of the lens and the shot: this cluster of lines intensifies and doubles the illusion of depth and traces the scenographic lines of force), and also by means of the entries into and exits from the screen space (likewise on an oblique axis, since the first films of Lumière), etc. Off-screen space *displaces* a scene's centre of gravity. Thus an off-screen 'presence' can only exist (only 'consist') in accordance with (of) a certain displacement. This displacement, which constitutes the off-screen space, is a fundamental resource of the classical film scene.

The classical theatre stage included a space 'off': the wings, the necessary outside of the cube in which the essentially discursive drama developed, fed by events, by the 'real' (e.g. the murder of Camille in Corneille's *Horace*). With cinema the space 'off' comes on stage, so to speak. Diachronical montage and camera mobility break open and forge a path through the space of a scene; the cube, reduced and parcelled into shots, is splintered from shot to shot, liberating the idea of a fluid, plastic, animated space. In the classical theatre scene the space 'off' is irreversibly just that: it is simply the exterior of the stage. In the cinema, however, the space 'off' can be thought of as a dimension of time and movement; off-screen space (a *particular* off-screen space) *becomes* screen space, screen space is transformed into off-screen space, simply as a result of the interplay of shot/reverse-shot, pans, or indeed sound. Good use has been made of this effect from a dramatic point of view. The metonymy of the 'real' is considerably reinforced as a result. This transformation of potential space into 'real' space and vice versa would justify the terms of the dialectic proposed by Burch. Burch notes in addition the fact that off-screen space becoming screen space gives rise to a qualitative modification of the concept of off-screen space:

> Off-screen may be divided into two other categories: it may be thought of as either *imaginary* or *concrete*. When [in *Nana*] the impresario's hand comes into frame to take the egg-cup, the space he occupies and defines is *imaginary* – we have not seen and do not know, for example, to whom this arm belongs. But as soon as the direct match reveals the whole scene, with Muffat and the impresario side by side, the space becomes concrete *retrospectively*. A similar process occurs in any situation involving the use of shot and reverse-shot, with the reverse-shot converting an off-screen space that was imaginary in the initial shot into concrete space. This off-screen space might conceivably *remain* imaginary if no wider shot, no shot taken from another angle (or no camera movement), is introduced revealing the person to whom the arm belongs . . .' (*Praxis du cinema*).

These are fragile distinctions which have all the weaknesses inherent in notional empiricism. But the observation is interesting. Burch makes clear that shot/reverse-shot, re-framing, etc., in classical scenography has a very precise dramatic *and/or ideological* function: to confirm the 'reality' (the concreteness) of a scene from one 'field' to another *via what is absent from it*. For Burch is quite right to note, perhaps more than he realizes, that space 'off' is first of all imaginary. But when he adds that a reverse-shot retrospectively renders that space 'concrete', he does not consider that there is a kind of conjuring trick going on here because, in becoming 'concrete' through the devices of matching, shot/reverse-shot or re-framing, this space remains no less 'imaginary', or, to be more precise, fictional. Quite simply, from one shot to the next, from one field to the next, a 'gain in reality', to use Bazin's expression, has been effected. The latent anxiety of the gap has been sutured.

But something ('some of' space) has remained radically *off-stage*. The suture is a foreclosure. And what is foreclosed in this way by the apparatus of the scene – the duplication of the field from one shot to the next, the strange process which *confirms* a space in the juxtaposition of its fragments – is another scene: that of the *film's production*. This scene is not homogeneous but dispersed into signifiers, the 'nearest' and most obvious of which are those – stubbornly cut out of the classical scene – of *orchestration*. In other words, those signifiers which are literally within arm's reach in most immediate proximity to the scene, on the set.

So – a banal enough point at this juncture – to remind ourselves that the institution of the classical film scene is effected by short-circuiting its materiality, the thing that makes it possible, means noting that this scene is, far less 'openly' (far more radically effaces the traces of what produces it) than the theatre or figurative painting, a *metaphorical* scene, the apparatus which ensures the circulation of metaphors. By 'far less openly' I mean the naturalizing of this metaphorical space.

In the system of this space we must deal with, as it were, two sides of the same operation: (1) a radical act of exclusion (foreclosure of the materiality of the film scene), (2) the investment of the space of exclusion (= the off-screen space, or in broader terms the off-screen scene) with a fictive reality which *continues* the space of the field – the space which belongs to the fiction. It is this that allows Bazin (who considers this effect an essential and constituent element of cinema) to write that the screen should be thought of as a *mask* which 'unveils only part of reality' and not as a *frame* which could contain the 'whole' of it, or again that the space of the screen is 'centrifugal'. To put it another way, it is the *identity* of off-screen space and screen space which assures the effect of reality in cinematic fiction and the possibility of all its dramatic manipulations (Bazin again: 'When a character leaves the camera field, we accept the fact that he is escaping from the visual field, but he continues to exist as himself somewhere else on the set, which is hidden from us. 'The identity of the character is only possible through the scenographic institution of the continuity of screen space and off-screen space, their topological identity). This means that in this system the off-screen scene could never have been conceived of *as such*, as *other* than the scene or as its pure loss which can never be regained.

The great problem which obsesses classical cinema is, as we know, 'how to get from one shot to the next'; how to get to the next shot without stumbling or tripping up. This fear of a hole is very evident in the IDHEC manuals,[6] particularly as regards editing. For example:

> It will sometimes happen that a match on movement or a matching of positions will be so imperfect that it *cannot be edited*. In such a case, the editor should look through his material for a transitional shot, or, if necessary, ask for one to be shot. Acting as a linch-pin between the two shots that are to be joined, the transitional shot eliminates the defective match. This rather barbarous procedure should of course only be used when every other means of matching the shots has been exhausted. (R. Louveau, *Le Montage de Film*, IDHEC.)

What must be preserved at all costs is the unity, the homogeneity, the continuity of this ideological scene where the drama or the comedy is still being played out:

> But the editor's concerns are not limited solely to problems of rhythm. It is also his business to assure the *continuity*, the *intelligibility* and the *homogeneity* of the film and to arouse and maintain the interest of the spectator by gauging it throughout the unfolding of the action, contriving dramatic and comic effects without ever forgetting that the sequence he is editing or improving is part of a whole, the elements of which interact with one another in an occasionally unpredictable way. A concern to maintain a constant view of the whole is what must always dominate an editor's work. Out of that concern will be born the harmonious equilibrium which characterizes skilfully edited films. (Ibid.)

The fantasy of mastery which emerges from this extract is a marvellous summary of the 'technician' ideology – the technician's work involves *maintaining* (a level, or a machine in working order), *gauging, contriving* (effects), *improving, assuring* (continuity), *balancing*, etc., in short building up all the *subordinate* operations possible without ever, *ever* TRANSFORMING anything, no matter what. It reveals that what is absolutely unthinkable, intolerable even, is the possibility of *altering* the model as defined (continuity, intelligibility, homogeneity). Anything goes, as long as the model is respected.

We have seen that the scenographic model brings into operation a fundamental foreclosure, more precisely the foreclosure of anything that might recall its specific functioning, the whole system of its functioning. Everything must work towards the effacing of the simulacrum of representation as such and its *gain in reality*. Reality is the endpoint, the stop-catch around which the system winds and shuts. It is the system's bolt, its ideological cornerstone: in this system, what *does not work* is extracted from it as a value and a fetish. The values of continuity, intelligibility and homogeneity are coextensive with it, because within this system *reality signifies the exemption from contradiction*, from movement (not of course that 'movement' which has been endlessly laboured as the 'essence of cinema', the movement which is perceived, felt, experienced, lived through by a passive spectator, the unfolding of the images, valorized for very understandable reasons). Introducing a dialectic, a contradiction, into the representation would necessarily mean altering the system, altering the 'reality' which is its fetishist endpoint.

This would in some way open up the representative scene to what it is closed to, its other scene, the *discontinuous, 'unintelligible', heterogeneous* scene of work. Revealing the means of production, the productive forces, the relations of production would open up the film to the question of its relation to history, its place in history.

On this point it would be naive, or at least mechanistic, to assert, as Jean-Louis Baudry seems to ('Effets idéologiques produits par l'appareil de base', *Cinéthique* 7/8), that it would be enough to allow just the camera or the instruments of production to 'enter the scene' in order to bring about the collapse of representation and the misrecognition it sets up.

3 *Instrument, work*

Jean-Louis Baudry's analysis of the functioning of the cinematic ideological apparatus, or more precisely his analysis of the *machine*, the representative cinematographic apparatus outside of any concrete historical, economic, political, and signifying inscription of that apparatus, seen solely from the standpoint of 'ideology' envisaged as an autonomous system, leads him to write:

> As an apparatus intended to obtain a precise ideological effect necessary to the dominant ideology, which is to create a fantasizing of the subject, the cinema collaborates with marked effectiveness in the preservation of idealism. In effect the cinema has taken up the role left vacant in western history by different artistic formations. This singularly coherent system is composed of an ideology of representation which is the primary axis on which turn the concept of aesthetic 'creation' and the specularization which organizes the *mise en scène* indispensable to the constitution of the transcendental function. All this happens as if the subject himself – and for good reason – could not answer for himself, and his own failing organs had to be replaced with secondary, grafted organs, with instruments or ideological formations capable of performing his function. *In fact, however, this substitution is only possible on condition that the instrument itself is obscured and repressed. Hence the disturbing effects* – similar in fact to those that announce the return of what has been repressed – unfailingly provoked by *the advent of the 'flesh and blood' instrument*, as in Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera*. It is both specular tranquillity and the confirmation of identity which collapse with *the unveiling of the mechanism – the inscription of work*. (My italics.)

Without making an issue of the curious conceptual transfusion made between 'ideology' and 'idealism', one notes that 'all this happens as if', to use his own formulation, Jean-Louis Baudry thought that the misrecognition inherent in representation (misrecognition of the process of signifying transformation, of the 'pre-sense work', as a recourse to specular and metaphysical identity) could be dispelled by a representation, itself literally providential, of the *'flesh and blood' instrument,* by way of some strange formulation which conforms, on this point, to the Husserlian problematic that is itself criticized in the text. The 'instrument' (the camera, I assume), the originating repression of cinematographic representation, would accordingly, with reference to that representation, be situated in the place of the real. Hence the 'effect of cognition' produced by its 'unveiling'. (The question for Baudry is in effect 'to know whether, if the work process is shown, the consumption of the product entails a cognition effect; or whether, if it is hidden, then the consumption of the product will obviously be accompanied by an ideological surplus value.')

It is clear that Baudry is here confusing camera, subject and work; if it is indeed the case, as he writes, that the camera, 'central' to the process of film production, is the phantasmic support of the 'subject', then the 'advent' in the film of this instrument (which, from the point of view of the working process, as Comolli has noted in 'Technique and Ideology',[7] is on the contrary just one instrument among many, in a series of differentiated practices) is at most the inscription of that support. In addition, would not this 'inscription' be merely a fetishizing of the instrument (and this is certainly the case in *Man With a Movie Camera,* where the camera is invested with a sexual identity)? Baudry reinforces this fetishism: the notions of 'unveiling' and of 'flesh and blood' are the internal snares of the system of representation, metaphysical determinants of the *truth,* of *meaning,* about which the same Jean-Louis Baudry can write (admittedly with regard to 'literature', not film, which would tend to indicate the efficacy of the representational apparatus in this field) that any recourse to such a concept, 'any movement, any system of thought determined by the scope of *meaning* and *truth* [has] as its inevitable consequence a loss of text'. The fact that in *Man With a Movie Camera* there is a second camera, which represents the 'first', a division of one into two, a process inseparable from the scenographic fragmentation and the metaphorical-metonymic substitution practised in the montage, is the opposite of an unveiling. It is a surplus-text, a germination in which the instrument *as signifier* is declined in sexual terms (eye, penis, mouth, vagina . . .) and the shooting process fetishized – it is the *montage* which, by way of the breaks and constant variations in level with which it marks the film process, transformationally inscribes and 'analyses' that fetishism; the montage is the productivity of the film. Now, while Baudry notes in passing and between the lines the role of montage, his analysis stops there: the space of the signifier is put in parentheses in his text, and there is no possibility of analysis, especially concrete analysis, of the way a film works on the phantasmic-metaphysical system which governs the technical structure of the cinematic Ideological State Apparatus. Let us repeat that 'the inscription of the work', an action which is no doubt necessary to any practice of the signifier as it endeavours to dispel, on materialist bases, the neurotic and ideological effects of representation, cannot be brought about by an irruption, a sudden wild *apparition* ('the advent of the instrument', magical, providential, miraculous, like many a Hollywood hero), but rather precisely through work – through a movement, excluding any immediacy, which displaces the ideological series. The film text, or the materialist film, cannot, whatever the case (and the case seems quite clear today), be applied through a reductive reflection (*no longer* show anything *except* the equipment and procedures of making a film – cf. the mechanistic-tautological period of *Cinéthique*: 'film is film, certainly, but it is all of film') on the fantasized location and the fetishized instruments of the 'work', as metonymies of 'the other scene', 'the off-screen reality' of the fiction; since this 'other scene' *is* no part of the real – it is *in play*. And it is in play at the moment in close proximity with another divided scene, that of history, *politics*, the class struggle, from which no faction of the intellectual, avant-garde petit bourgeoisie can any longer claim, without being regressive, to be finding cover *in its work*.

The mechanistic limitation of Baudry's analysis can also be found in a foreclosure of history and of the principal contradiction, which usually accompanies the foreclosure of the signifier (still being applied in *Cinéthique's* current dogmatic period). Baudry makes the sphere of ideology autonomous, a tendency which is characteristically inscribed, at its extreme, in a phraseology whose apparent 'stringency' should not delude us, as in the following: 'It is in the end of little importance what forms are adopted for a narrative, what the "contents" of the image are, from the moment that an identification becomes possible'; or, more seriously from the viewpoint of the primacy of politics in all forms of struggle, the following 'analysis' which is at once both singularly restrictive and vague:

> The cinema, then, can appear to be a sort of substitute psychic apparatus which conforms to the model defined by the dominant ideology [i.e. the transcendental ego guaranteed by specular identification; from which it follows that dominant ideology equals idealism, which is to move the problem onto a level of abstract generality that makes it not at all surprising that the analysis should stumble when it meets a concrete object, e.g. Vertov]. The goal of the repressive system, (economic in the first place [?]) is to impede deviations from or active denunciation of this 'model'.

I will not make a point out of obviously incantatory formulas such as '*the* cinema' or '*the* repressive system'. Any specifying comes back to altering the perfect circularity of a closed system and its imperviousness to history, i.e. to economics (modifications of the productive forces/relations of production relationship) and to the politics which is its concrete expression. Baudry can also write: 'The cinema collaborates with marked effectiveness in the preservation of idealism', as if idealism were a thing or a 'state'. The *technicist* reduction of 'cinema' here connects, in another form, with the repression of history practised by Lebel (who employs it in the relativist mode: you can do anything as long as you know how to do it and why it is done; Baudry uses the absolutist mode: there is only one thing to do – unveil the mechanism and, thereby, the idealist vocation of the cinema which supports it. On the one hand the technical base is purified of any ideological overdetermination, on the other it is loaded with the whole of ideological causality).[8]

Jean-Louis Baudry's analysis is 'standing on its head'. He properly locates and describes the ideological link between the fantasizing of the *space* produced by the film camera, a fantasizing reinforced by the foreclosure, in the institution of the classical *scene*, of the 'field' of the techinical instrumentation; and he describes the metaphysics of the transcendental subject. But by giving this field, the instrumental base, the main role, and refusing to analyse the actions of foreclosure, or of the 'intervention' of the *instrument as signifier* in the fictional scene, as actions that are historically determined, Baudry inevitably falls into the formalism and hypostasis of an ideological effect; in the final analysis the hypostasis of the ideological 'sphere' conceived of as a closed system not worked on by history.

Baudry does not stress the fact that the apparatus of the classical cinematic scene is supported by an 'off-stage' which is supposedly continuous (the extension and diffusion of the off-screen 'space'). Two things (screen space and off-screen space) are fused into one ('reality', 'subject'): what we have is the foreclosure of the signifier, of what is heterogeneous from the subject.

Which is to say (and Baudry does not say it, since for him the important thing is 'the advent of the flesh and blood instrument') that what is most important in the deconstruction of the 'specular/transcendental stage' (an ideological stage on which move the puppets of *bourgeois* drama and comedy) is the inscription of the (off-)screen space of practice *as heterogeneous* from the reality effects of the fiction. One thing ('reality') is divided in two (practice/effects of meaning, reality, or truth). This heterogeneity releases the signifier and the *écriture* on to a *general stage* – sexual, economic and political – which cannot be reannexed into the 'field' of a consciousness. Films work that stage, they are not its mirror.

The inscription of the field of practice *and* of the economic, political and sexual stage it plays on can only be thought of strategically. While the 'unveiling' of the technical apparatus in the films of Vertov, Godard and the Dziga-Vertov group has had positive ideological effects at different and highly determined historical moments, in ideological spaces not worked by the same forces, it is easy to demonstrate that in the case of the so-called 'direct' cinema or 'cinéma-vérité', for example in Rouch or (in a more clearly reactionary fashion) Perrault, the effects of 'work' and the inscription of 'technique' are reinvested in the field of truth, indeed of 'communication'. (Confrontation is the commonest game in the ideological space of direct cinema; confrontation of no matter what with no matter what, the certainty is that some 'truth' will result – cf. *Chronique d'un été* and the 'truth', political among other kinds, which arises there.)[9] The instruments and the technicians that fill the screen space or suggest the presence of an off-screen space full of activity thereby acquire a Socratic role. Simultaneously inside and outside, not wholly in the screen space or the off-screen space, playing on the line of difference, of inclusion-exclusion, they allow access to a superior truth (of the participants in the film? of the spectators? Here again the most plainly hysterical identification plays against the backdrop of a 'truth' which escapes).

4 *The divided scene*

The principle of material division of the scene is therefore systematically obscured and misrecognized in bourgeois cinema (one of its fundamental characteristics). While fragmented, the classical film scene is nevertheless unified; it is in this sense that the discourse held there is principally symptomatic if, as Lacan writes, 'it is the fragmented body which carries the symptom, and the body *whole* that serves to avoid understanding it.' The classical film scene, then, is to be read in its overdetermination.

On the contrary, a literal materialist scene would first of all be defined as divided, marked by a signifying bar implying a productive, broken, contradictory scenography irreducible to the flat 'realism' of the specular scene. It is evident that the 'bar' or break in question necessarily bears on the phantasm, the *jouissance,* at work on that specular scene; and primarily on the 'continuous' topography which assures its 'reality'. The bar implies the castration of the eye (that of the spectator: the one who *looks*), of the central role assigned to the eye in classical scenography. What is released in such a 'castration' (= limitation of sovereignty) is the gestural, phonic (or rather phono-graphic), coloured, etc., signifying network which links the circularity of specular topography with the linearity of bourgeois narration (bourgeois first because it presents individuals on the scene, monads against a background of repressed history, thereby reproducing, even before the question of 'content' is raised, bourgeois and petit bourgeois ways of life and thought and automatically giving them an artistic, moral, metaphysical 'value', with a spiritual volume).

The classical scene is divided, and assumed to be complete in each of its fragments. The 'materialist' scene is divided, and is constructed-destroyed in the articulation and dialectical interaction of its fragments. The 'materialist' scene is *worked out* within an irreducible heterogeneity, where the homogeneous classical scene *represents* by abstracting a general volume of contradictions, for which it thus becomes a dead location.

The current avant-garde, in differing degrees (and in differing political degrees, distinguished generally by voluntarist ideology and a residual idealism which can be especially felt in the work of Duras – *Jaune le soleil* – and Straub, but is not absent from the films of the Dziga-Vertov group, despite the systematic attempt to apply Maoist thought), has liberated the *plural* of the filmic scene by decisively attacking 'the bourgeois concept of representation' (*Wind from the East*), the ideological homogeneity of the bourgeois scene. The disjunction, the 'ungluing' of scenes and bands of sound, voice, icon, light, etc., which the classical cinema envisaged solely in terms of a division of labour erased at the end by the final operations of mixing, grading, synchronizing, etc. (operations taken for granted in the teaching of technique – the Lebelian tautology of 'pure technical necessity', already mentioned), is found more or less systematically at work in films such as *Jaune le soleil, Othon, Wind from the East, Luttes en Italie*. Only the last two, however, produce at the same time an analysis of the scenographic apparatus as an ideological apparatus (in *Wind from the East* in terms of an analysis of representation as a snare; in *Luttes en Italie* in terms of an inscription of what is repressed by the representation: the field of productive forces/relations of production). In *Jaune le soleil* and *Othon*, the signifying closure of the topography liberates the dangerous play, 'fatal' insistence of the statement, as it loses mastery, liberates the sound volume. This loss of mastery, it must be stressed, *implicates* the spectator, calls into question his or her place as spectator (which in classical scenography is on the contrary guaranteed by the fantasizing of the scene).

Such a questioning is only possible on condition that there is a continual displacement of the 'literal' scene (or, if you prefer, the 'aesthetic' scene) under pressure from the principal historical contradiction, 'the other scene' of the class struggle. Without this 'other' historical scene, any questioning of the 'place' of the spectator, or of the scenographic apparatus, would be meaningless, lacking a stake, or would have only the minor meaning of a game without risks or consequences. The concept of the relative autonomy of ideology marks the displacement and activation of a specific scene by the political scene at its most trenchant point, the bourgeois/proletariat antagonism, which continues to divide the petit bourgeoisie ideologically and politically.

It is in this uncontrollable 'off-screen space' that the splitting of the cinematic scene is located.

Translated by Lindley Hanlon

Notes

1 I'm reminded of this observation by Kazan: 'For example, something that struck me. *La Guerre est finie*. I love Resnais' work – it never leaves me feeling indifferent, and often it interests me a great deal. Only there was something in this film which made me feel uncomfortable. The actor's shirt – Yves Montand's – was always clean, right through the film. In the end he screws the girl, fully dressed, and when he gets up his shirt is just as it was before! . . . Well, I said to myself, O.K., let's see . . . It's a stupid, childish objection anyway! . . . I protested, I was furious . . . I couldn't stop thinking about it, about that man's shirt, and I said to myself, but really, is that how a man in his situation wears a shirt?' (Interview, *Cahiers* 184.) Clearly, between this film and this spectator, between '*écriture*' and 'reading', there is a connecting ideological process of

challenge-response which goes beyond the simple question of 'realism'. (Author's note.)

2 'Verisimilitude' does not mean that the events of the narrative would have or could have 'occurred in reality'. The 'fantastic' generally obeys the laws of verisimilitude, which also give it its concept; verisimilitude is defined by a causal, linear linking of fictive 'facts', provoking – by hypostasizing the cause – the effect of assertion, credibility, 'reality'. It is the *supposition* of the cause in the effect which produces the overall effect of reality and allows us to speak of metonymic 'effects of the real'. (Author's note.)

3 'We are concerned with a rule, empirically established during the 1920s, which has it that any new angle on the same subject must differ from the preceding one by at least 30 degrees. It had been noticed that any angle change of less than 30 degrees (unless it was a match cut) results in what has come to be called a 'jump', a kind of disorientation caused by the missing width and clarity of the intervening change: the new shot is not sufficiently autonomous, especially if the scale of the shots is similar. Yet one could just as easily say that this disorientation results from the plastic needlessness of such a 'match', and mainly from the fact that the eye is frustrated, since the eye demands that, if there is a displacement, it should be a displacement that takes account of the contours of the subject, and that the tensions resulting from any such deplacements should be pronounced and clear.' (Noël Burch, *Praxis du cinéma*, Paris, Gallimard, 1969, p. 60.) This 'frustrating of the eye' should of course be read ideologically. What suffers here is the free – master – movement of the eye in a homogenous space. The clarity of the cut at 30+ degrees resolves the difference – the 'jump' – to the benefit of a *new unveiled aspect* of the object; as for the 'autonomy' of the shot, it only designates here the autonomy – the mastery – of the eye. The eye is simply the support of the subject. As Burch notes a little further on, 'changing the angle by less than 30 degrees has already become part of the modern film-maker's vocabulary'. (Author's note.)

4 The French is *champ*, i.e. 'field', but we have preserved the terms used in the English edition of Burch's text, 'screen space' and 'off-screen space' (*hors champs*), except where the French text requires the translation 'field'.

5 This statement may seem excessive. Very long lenses and big close-ups removed the 'sense' of depth. In fact, the concern here is with a 'limited' or 'flattened' field (the 'overlapping' of planes when a long lens is used is inevitably felt as an anomaly, indeed an 'effect'), which is to say that the 'normality' of depth continues to control the scene. Jean-Louis Baudry (*Cinéthique* 7/8, see below) is correct when he writes: 'Recourse to multiple lenses, when such an action is not dictated by technical considerations aimed at re-establishing a normal perspective field (shots in confined or open spaces which have to be enlarged or contracted), does not so much destroy the perspective as make it play the role of a referential norm.' (Author's note.)

Baudry's text is translated as 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus' in Bill Nichols (ed.), *Movies and Methods* (II), pp. 531–42.

6 IDHEC: Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques, the Paris film school.

7 See Ch. 16 in this volume.

8 As we are rightly reminded in issue 6 of *Ciné-Forum*, the magazine of the film club of the Youth and Culture Centre at Poitiers whose work we mentioned in *Cahiers* 230, this hypostatic approach arises from 'a symptom whose effects, in Brecht, materialist criticism has already recognized'. Quoting from and com-

menting on a discussion in *Filmkurier* – 'a fascinating impression, whatever the significance one may want to attribute to the film' – Brecht writes: 'Faced with technique, intellectuals are full of uncertainty. The ruthless but powerful way technique apprehends the regions of the mind fills them with a mixture of scorn and amazement. Technique becomes a fetish.' (*Writings on Literature and Art.*) (Author's note.)

9 *Chronique d'un été*, directed by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin in 1960. For an extended analysis of the film see Fereydoun Hoveyda, '*Cinéma vérité*, or Fantastic Realism', Ch. 24 in volume 2.

22 Serge Daney, Jean-Pierre Oudart: 'The Name of the Author (on the "place" of *Death in Venice*)'

(Le Nom-de-l'Auteur: à propos de la "place" de *Mort à Venise', Cahiers du Cinéma* 234–5, December 1971–January–February 1972)

> 'For the bourgeoisie, the communist workers are as ugly and dirty as the sexual, hairy, lower parts of the body. Sooner or later the result will be a bloody eruption in the course of which the sexless noble heads of the bourgeoisie will be chopped off.'
>
> Georges Bataille

Visconti's cinematic practice is inscribed in a tradition which also includes Mann and which Lukács summed up 'theoretically': the tradition of 'critical realism'. Critical realism is that 'classical' bourgeois realism whose thematic repeats, stresses, and rescrutinizes the myths of the decadence, disorder, contradictions, and decline of the ruling classes. It is an *écriture* that is essentially and characteristically *defensive*, in the twofold sense of strategy (political/military) and analysis (it implies and puts into effect a system of *denial*).

Lukács speaks of Mann as of one 'in search of bourgeois man'[1] (the *citizen* in his abstract universality). It is no doubt in this context that we should understand Visconti's project 'The Remembrance of Things Past' (and not in the perspective of Proust's text, which is undoubtedly more complex, though the Proust-Visconti connection should not be without interest). 'Critical realism' should be read, then, as the endlessly renewed, untiringly reiterated (for good reason) exposition of *deferred* revolution (thereafter conceived of as the end of civilization, the collapse of its values in some future nocturnal catastrophe: critical realism characteristically belongs to the twilight). Materialist dialectical writing, on the other hand (cf. on this point Brecht and the writings of Mao . . .), must in its work think through both the process of destruction and the process of revolutionary construction, and the unity of these contraries.

A progressive member of the higher bourgeoisie *but* also an aesthete, Visconti is torn between the negative cult of Beauty (a scarcely veiled sublimation of homosexuality which nevertheless draws a whole reactionary ideology in under that veil) and its *historical* critique (a critique in principle ideologically based on historical materialism, though Visconti is obviously completely unversed in dialectical materialism since it would put his very practice in question). Now, late in his career and late in an 'age' of the cinema, Visconti has drawn this film from Mann's 'Faustian' problem of the individual (ideology of the artist, etc.) and its Lukácsian reading; a film in which the system of a fiction and its sexual levers, which in the 'classical' cinema were always masked as such (system, levers: machine), seems to be fixed, epitomized, and represented. In Visconti's earlier films this masking function was assumed by an explicit, perhaps even obtrusive, recourse to several notions deriving from historical materialism – but historical materialism as 'read', recuperated and 'summed up' by Lukácsian idealism.

This ambiguous ideological recourse to materialism is what is deleted and missing from *Death in Venice*. Not because of any 'fault' on Mann's part, nor because of the constraints of adaptation. The historical context and the dating of the narrative are much more present in the book than in the film, and the repression of history in the film is all the more significant because the historical 'subject' was there in Visconti's text. This latest film is illuminating precisely on this point: in Visconti, the historical pre-text has only ever been invoked as an *appeal to myth (Senso, Vaghe stelle dell'orsa, The Damned,* etc.). This is one of the two operations of (idealist) classical cinema on history: *either* myth is invoked to *guarantee* history, as in *Young Mr Lincoln, or* myth intervenes to *repress* history; in both cases it acts to fix and eternalize it (myth is precisely that).[2]

1 Fiction/narration

The placing and articulation of the 'ideologemes' in Visconti's films, and the ideological effects of those films, cannot be described outside of their fictions. It is these fictions which impose the conception of a closed (terminated) history, inscribed in terms of a prediction of the past (contemplated from its end) and 'lived' by a character who witnesses the decline both of his milieu (his class) and himself. A twofold representation of the decline (the 'twilight') develops along concomitant axes:

- The narrative is the story of the relation between a witness-character and his 'referent', this 'referent' being less the social class to which he belongs than his cultural and ideological milieu. (The fact that Visconti never presents or analyses that social class as such is clearly indicated in the way he inscribes the very indices which would allow it to be defined: cf. the purely magical inscription of the high furnaces of the von Essenbeck family at the beginning of *The Damned,* which signifies 'damnation' far more than it does pre-war German capitalism; or the character of the gamekeeper in *The Leopard,* completely deflected from his potential function as indicator of the Prince's situation as landowner).
- Simultaneously, the narrative is the revelation, deferred until now, of

a 'secret' about the character and/or his milieu (his family); a secret correlative of his decline, and its metaphorical signifier.

These two axes are inscribed in a narrative discourse of the 'classical' type (at least since *Senso*), whose structure (the installation of a fictive 'real') implies an unchangeable relation between two terms:
- an actor-figure/lever: the witness of the story;
- its 'objects': its scene, its social framework.

The repetition/transformation of Hollywood cinema

Death in Venice could be said to be in many ways a culminating point, the closure of 'classical' European cinema, which has almost always presented itself as a repetition/transformation of classical Hollywood cinema:
- The narrative economy of this European cinema is based on the transitivity of a narration and on the institution of a fiction as the real presence of and mutual understanding between the actor-figures (on the 'ideological' community of characters in Hollywood cinema, see Jean-Pierre Oudart's article in *Cahiers* 232).[3] It thus essentially reproduces the mode of Hollywood 'transparency', in the form of a supplement in the *mise en scène*. This supplement extends from the (increasingly purely decorative) use of tracking shots, through zooming – in Rossellini, for example – to the re-marking of the theatrical scene in Renoir, for instance. (A signature that can be read as antagonistic to the 'neutrality' of Hollywood *mise en scène*, at least in its classical period. It is on the other hand an indication of Hollywood's degeneration that there is a profusion of these effects in recent films – Penn, Schlesinger, Russell; cf. in this respect, also, *The Touch* as caricature.)
- On the same lines, classical European cinema, both before the war (Renoir, Carné . . .) and after (Rossellini, Visconti . . .), presents itself as a kind of 'uneasy conscience' of Hollywood cinema, a tableau/critique of a society (where Hollywood cinema offers complete ideological accord between the values of the cinema and those of society) – as a 'critical realist' cinema.

In Visconti (since his earliest films), this transformation of the narrative economy of classical Hollywood cinema is inscribed in three modes:

(a) through the positioning of a central character as the agent of a reflection on/criticism of his milieu;
(b) through the duplicated inscription of the filmic scene as an object of the director's look;
(c) through the valorization of the actor-figures as narcissistic objects of the director (the proletariat in *La terra trema*, for example).

Hence the three major ideological determinations of the Viscontian inscription:

(a) that of historical fiction (of the scenario). History is understood by a privileged witness (who is a narrator, that is the actor-figure/lever – note that in Hollywood cinema the lever(s) are not narrators, except in the late Hollywood 'masters': Mankiewicz, Preminger, etc.);
(b) that of the real/fictive aspect of the *mise en scène*: the fiction is understood/criticized by the *auteur*, and the look of the *auteur* also functions as a lever (so everything happens as though there were a *double system of levers* in operation – the Viscontian protagonist/the director – whose presence is subsumed by the duplicated scenic effect);
(c) a neurotic valorization of the actor-figures as the director's narcissistic objects (Tadzio in *Death in Venice*).

2 Overdetermination of the Viscontian fiction

The referent

Before we can analyse this overdetermination, we must face the problem of the *referent* in Hollywood and pre-war and post-war European fiction. The referent is an ideological notion, and must be considered as such if we are to deconstruct its effects and analyse its process of production.

Let us now assume that the referential inscription of the filmed object consists in a positioning of the filmic figuration such that:

1 The figuration is established as real in the fiction, and produces the merging of the figure with his real 'referent', external to the filmic product.
2 This confusion is never ideologically neutral in such fictions: it finds active support in the establishment of certain figures as exchange values, the ideological standards of the fiction. Particularly in post-war Hollywood cinema (the 'classic' Western, for example), where a privileged lever constitutes the ideological value set up as the final arbiter of the film's discourse, inasmuch as the other figures 'understand' him or her as such.

In other words, in such cinema the referential inscription consists of the articulation of a pairing constituted by a series of figures who see an 'other' as their 'value' (their moral 'reference'; cf. 'Lincoln'). The value of this surplus character in the fiction is thus produced by the credit others assign to him. The ideological surplus value with which this character is invested should be seen, then, as the effect of a fictional economy (or of the economic functioning of a fiction) such that a series of figures, in producing an other, support the inscription of that other in the role of their representative.

The dominant ideological effects of the classical cinema are based on the institution of a 'representative of the representation', who sustains the ideological severing of the individuality of each figure (each has his supplement of presence) and supports the articulation of the whole ideological community. The severing and the articulation are comprised, in their signifying materiality, of:

1 a systematic accentuation of all the practices of exchange, the (economic, linguistic) 'gift', overdetermined by the repressed inscription of capitalist economic practices (where embezzlement = treachery, a failure to keep one's word);
2 a foreclosure of any sexual inscription (no figuring of copulation, foreclosure of sexual organs as signifiers), overdetermined by a fetishist erotic inscription (the fetish occurring in the place of the signifier – the place of the foreclosed inscription of the sexual organs).

Hollywood fiction reinscribes the exported ideologemes of the political, economic and social ideology of America at the beginning of the century, and directly supports its practices, actively intervening in the area of American politics. European pre-war fiction, on the other hand, imports its material from a bourgeois cultural sphere (the novel, theatre) whose repressed political discourse it reinscribes in humanist and metaphysical terms (there is no dialectic of the class struggle in Renoir, only a closed system in which the various discourses of the characters are infinitely substituted one for another).

The critical realism of pre-war European cinema consists of the critical *mise en scène* (Renoir, Carné) of tableaux or scenes of a bourgeois type; it imposes an ideological conception of filmic practice: the critical look of a director at 'his' world (Renoir's 'social whole'). This conception was to be reinscribed by the practice of post-war 'neo-realist' cinema, marked by two principal determinations:

1 a repression of the petit bourgeois cultural inscription of pre-war cinema (the *mise en scène* of Renoir's 'world' gives way in Rossellini's first films to a direct presentation of the bourgeoisie);
2 an extreme confusion of the figures and their real 'referents' through the inscription of a privileged actor serving as the lever of the fiction in two ways: as an agent of the director's critical reflection on the real world (a fictive-reality instituted as the historical present, the confused real exterior of the film and its actor), and as the erotic object of the fiction (the heroines in Renoir and Rossellini).

The relationship thereby set up, within the framework of this repressed (and eroticized) political discourse, between the hero (heroine) and the other characters of the fiction (the world) consists, literally, in the search for a referent (in the sense of a good reference) which is unattainable (the model of the ideal man in *The Golden Coach*, an inexpressible love relationship in *Journey to Italy*).

The hero (heroine) is searching for something different, something he cannot find in his world, from which he excludes himself in a purely phantasmic way. This exclusion is filmically inscribed:

1 in an 'obessional' mode as the endless re-marking of the *mise en scène* effects: the theatre as the moral/metaphysical off-screen space of the heroine of *The Golden Coach*, which is always included in the field of the *mise en scène* and always exposed by the system of the *mise en scène* to the critique/look of the director;
2 in a 'hysterical' mode as the valorization of the 'true' moments of the actors' play: Rossellini's shooting method.

In other words, what in post-war European cinema has come to occupy the position of referent is both:

1 the object of the *mise en scène*, denoted in the fiction as a false counterpart (Renoir's theatre and Rossellini's bourgeoisie);
2 the 'true' moment when the false counterpart is eclipsed by the inscription of a lack in the *mise en scène* (in the acting, or the make-up, or the physiognomy: cf. the editing of *The Golden Coach*, where stage effects and direct presentation effects are indefinitely exchanged).

The one inscribes a counterpart of political break, the other a counterpart of analysis, by producing an effect of an outside, a break in the *mise en scène* which is heavily invested by a humanist ideology.

Both, in the last analysis, *mark the edges* of the director's discourse, which is the ideological function of the referent.

The referential inscription in Visconti's films

The referential system in Visconti's films is based, in a constant and repetitive fashion (contrary to pre-war and post-war Hollywood cinema, and to French and Italian neo-realism, whose networks of over-determination and fictional inscription are almost always much more complex), on the fictive relationship of a pair of elements:

1 a historico-social entity inscribed in literally scenic terms: the bourgeois class as an organized spectacle (cf. the Italian theatre tradition, the theatrical scene so heavily invested by the Italian bourgeoisie since the nineteenth century – Italian opera);
2 a privileged spectator witnessing the decadence of his milieu.

This pairing inscribes the dominant ideological determination of Viscontian fiction. On to it are grafted other relations between the figures, inscribing the specifically neurotic determination of Visconti's films (a determination which includes both the personal neurosis of the director, and the huge neurosis of the system of classical *mise en scène* as the post-war

European cinema academicized it, the larger neurosis including Visconti's personal neurosis).

Example: *Rocco and his Brothers*: Rocco, his older brother and his mother, in other words his narcissistic object and his 'primordial object'.

Example: *Vaghe stelle dell'orsa*: Sandra, her dead father and her brother.

Example: *The Damned*: Martin, his mother and Aschenbach (Martin's history, as the fiction describes it, in fact constitutes a kind of 'psychoanalytical interpretation of the parent/child relationship in Visconti's films).

The Viscontian fiction is thus the presentation of a class for the look of a spectator for whom it constitutes not only the social framework but also the ideological referent, and who witnesses its decadence and collapse as a referent. Visconti's work in these historical 'frescoes' has essentially inscribed the spectacle of the decay of his class, within a linear fiction heavily overdetermined by his mechanistic notion of history and his neurotic obsession with the dissolution of the bourgeoisie; in other words, decay understood as the decomposition then and there of a staged spectacle, without the outside intervention of a real, historical destructive agent.

In the inscription of this decadence, sexuality (understood not as a biological agent but as a complex body of social practices and institutions) has acted on two levels:

1 as the inscriber of the mythic cause of the decadence of the bourgeoisie (cf. Proust), the class and the individual (in reality it is always the class, understood in terms of individualized destiny), thereby overdetermining the inscription of any historical causality and biographical interpretation as Visconti presents them;
2 as the inscriber of the symptom, the secret, the truth of that decadence (*Vaghe stelle dell'orsa, The Damned, Death in Venice*).

The Viscontian referential inscription has been acted on by the distortion between:

1 on the one hand, the ideological necessity of delivering a Marxist discourse in which the economic determination should be foremost, and the insistent overdetermination of Viscontian erotic fantasies conveyed by a heavily invested cultural inscription (Proust, Mann): in *The Damned*, this results in a close convergence of the play of characters' economic positions, erotic roles and political relationships (their strategy), a convergence which in fact denies the inscription of any specific political discourse by the characters; who (with the exception of Aschenbach, the mythical Nazi, a lever who is omnipresent and ideally castrated, with no erotic interests) literally make no distinction between the fulfilment of their erotic desires and their political practice (Martin), in that the multiple determinations of those desires and that practice are never separated out by the *écriture* of the fiction, which on the contrary sets down the convergence as the

ultimate interpretation of the historical fiction they play out (the story of Martin's transformation into a Nazi is entirely contained within the 'analytical' interpretation the character gives of it, confirmed by the knowledge Aschenbach has of Martin's psychological determination, a knowledge whose exposure, merged with the linking episodes in Martin's story, forms the explanation, in terms of psychological motivation, of the rescue of a corrupt bourgeoisie by Nazism);
2 on the other hand, in the inscription of sexuality as induced by this major contradiction, a distortion between making a metaphor of erotic relationships and literalizing sexual relationships: sexuality, as the mythic cause of decadence, is inscribed in Visconti's work as it is in the work of Hollywood directors – as a metaphorical merging of the relations between economic positions and erotic roles (parental relations, in particular, simultaneously exposing the bourgeois neurotic scene and, merged with it, its 'genesis'). But as a symptom, secret, truth of the false counterpart of the bourgeois *mise en scène*, sexuality can only be inscribed as a sexual moment of the fiction (the sexual act as described in *Vaghe stelle dell'orsa* or shown in *The Damned*).

The insistent action of this distortion, the determining contradiction of Visconti's ideological/neurotic inscription of the staging of bourgeois decadence, therefore produces:

1 the eruption of sexuality on to the social scene as the symptom, secret, truth of the *mise en scène* (the bourgeois literary tradition of the sexual scandal, in which Visconti is inscribed);
2 the disentangling of the twofold erotic/economic inscription by the more and more insistent inscription of the consummation of the act, an inscription forced on Visconti because he can no longer inscribe sexuality in the form of a metaphor, from the moment when it not only forms the determining factor in the causal chain of his fictions (the positioning of desire as a determining historical agent, as with American directors) but is also instituted (in contrast to Hollywood) as the dominant factor of their interpretation, and therefore also has to be inscribed at their point of rupture. And the point of rupture in Visconti's fiction is the one where sexuality, which is both included in a metaphor for economic class relations and in a metaphor for historical causality, and also instituted ideologically as their explanatory factor, appears in the fiction as it is depicted (verbally or through an image), at the moment of truth. The point of rupture in Visconti's fiction is the point where sexuality appears in the role of the truth of the bourgeois *mise en scène*, of its unveiled secret: the veil is lifted on a forbidden sexual relationship, in the form of a description or a consummation of the act.

The erasure of the referential inscription in Visconti's films (which should be seen both as the positioning of the bourgeois class and of the bourgeois as the ideal humanist society model, the ideological and ideal referent of the neurotic ego, and as the positioning of sexuality as the only factor explaining their collapse – an explanation from which the desire of the film's writer, Visconti, a bourgeois neurotic subject, has been removed by a *mise en scène* in which its inscription is foreclosed) – this erasure should therefore be read as the product of the double inscription of sexuality. This product, going beyond the fiction and forming its point of rupture, its outside, is the sexual act. A sexual act, or rather a sexual relationship, depicted in the fiction itself as forbidden, subject to censorship, overdetermined by the fantasies of the neurotic bourgeois subject Visconti (a subject who is not the director, inasmuch as the director is the foreclosed inscription or the censoring, because his inscription, as we shall see, is inadmissible – as *Death in Venice*, which constitutes its denial, reveals).

In the text of Visconti's films a double censorship of sexuality is operating. There is the cultural censorship of the bourgeoisie, which feeds its fictions (acceptable and interesting in the eyes of the subjects of the bourgeoisie because these fictions allow them to fantasize about a transformation of the social relations of economic production, in which sexuality is inscribed, a transformation prohibited by the state apparatus and the real economic institutions of this bourgeoisie); and there is a second censorship which *Death in Venice* shows us is a censorship of the materialist reinscription, unacceptable to bourgeois culture, of the first. In the context of a genuine materialist reading of Visconti's film, the problem is, then: in what text is sexuality inscribed in Visconti's films, given that, since the analytical interpretation of all his fictions has made us aware of a 'knot', their fiction is overdetermined by a neurotic inscription, and that the subject Visconti is an obsessional homosexual? It is not only in terms of bourgeois cultural censorship that the inscription of sexuality in Visconti's films and particularly in *Death in Venice* is made and resolved, and almost exceeds its limits; and this is because something, in the articulation of its signifying chain, allows the subject Visconti both to inscribe sexuality in terms of bourgeois cultural censorship and to play its game, but, in inscribing it, exposes the director to describing in his fiction that part of the articulation which is unacceptable to bourgeois cultural censorship (the unacceptable being not one of the terms, but the description of their articulation).

In *Death in Venice*, unlike in *Vaghe stelle dell'orsa* and *The Damned*, sexuality no longer erupts spectacularly onto a society scene, or on a screen. Or rather, its eruption is no longer (or no longer just) a factor in the fictional story (*Death in Venice* is indeed still the story of a desire), nor a factor in the ideological interpretation of that story (an interpretation which is now in fact only inscribed in the 'explanation' scene between Gustav von Aschenbach and his friend, but which is no longer, as it was in *The Damned*, heavily programmed by the position of the Nazi Aschenbach as the master of the other characters' destiny, the guide and ultimate profiteer of their desires). Sexuality is now also a constant surplus of both roles, a textual surplus of the fiction and an erasure of its explanation (the 'explanatory' inserts, which Visconti no doubt thought of as factors in the analytical interpretation of Gustav von Aschenbach's story, the brothel and concert scenes, are also caught up in a textual play which goes beyond their explanatory import and displaces their signifiers). This obliges us to read the film's discourse as a compromise solution (or rather, a failure from the point of view of contemporary bourgeois cinematic norms) between the inscription of an admissible sexual repression and that of an inadmissible repression which acts on the former, which is inscribed in its materiality, in the text of the former, and which is insistent, in that its writer is obsessed with the desire to describe its articulation rather than merely write it, with the perpetual displacement of his signifiers, the bourgeois poetic object he is signing, although he covers himself with a somewhat idealist reading of Mann and Proust.

For the text of *Death in Venice*, it may be appropriate to record the production of the textual structure of Visconti's earlier films and their pre-texts. One of the surest methods is perhaps to locate, in these films, the articulation of a series of representative systems and the supplements which support the ideological effects of their inscription – that is, the play of fictive pairings which make up these systems and are inscribed in their fictions.

3 The text: representation and supplement in Visconti's films

The re-presentation

The Visconti text can only be unravelled according to the order assigned to the articulation of the signifiers in the fictions. Any other method would produce a simple thematic recital and would lead to a primitive psychoanalytical or Marxist interpretation of these fictions, but would miss their signifying articulation, and close itself off from an understanding of their operations of production and their effects of reception.

On a first reading, the elements at play in Visconti's films are:

- a social *mise en scène* which inscribes the bourgeoisie in a role of representation, in the eyes of a figure who discovers a fault in that representation;
- this fictive pairing is itself filmically inscribed in a scenic re-marking (an insistent framing) of the classical *mise en scène*, which, since *Vaghe stelle dell'orsa*, has been overdetermined by zoom effects, whose function and effect is to designate the figures, perverting the convention of camera movement in academic Hollywood cinema, and making the framing readable as the selection of a filmed object made by someone who is no longer contained in the fiction, who is no longer the imaginary absent being of the fiction but the *author* of the film's shooting (that is, the film-maker established as the agent who chooses the filmed object, thereby subsumed as the subject of a desire: a desire to know something 'about' Sandra; a desire to see an object in *Death in Venice*).

It is particularly important to trace this line of reading since, as with all post-war European film-makers, the author of the filming appears to be heavily invested, both erotically and politically, in his objects; and in *La terra trema* Visconti in fact produces a *mise en scène* of the object which, as signifier in the text of his films, is first inscribed in that text as the axis of an ideological/neurotic convergence (a *mise en scène*) of the proletariat both as narcissistic objects of the neurotic subject of the bourgeoisie, Visconti, and as historical subjects literally occupying the foreground of his *mise en scène*, the narcissistic objects being real actors – but it is precisely the fictional system of the cinema of representation that forecloses the social and/or sexual relationship between director and actor, a relationship which returns in the fictive-reality of the *mise en scène*). This convergence, in any Viscontian fiction, does not take place in the form of a literal depiction of the erotic relations between a bourgeois figure and a proletarian figure; it is, however, inscribed in various ways (the importance accorded, within the framework of the *mise en scène*, to the young domestics, who are however depicted in the fiction solely in terms of an economic problematic: the master-servant relationship).

We may note, in fact, the absence of any determining erotic inscription in Visconti's films, up to *Vaghe stelle dell'orsa*, which marks the placing of a series of signifying chains whose overdetermination is re-produced in the subsequent films, *The Damned* and *Death in Venice*.

In *Vaghe stelle dell'orsa*, we can see that:

– the fiction equals the retrospective history of the death of a family of which Sandra and her brother are the last generation; also the replacement of an old bourgeoisie by a new one (Italian, American);

– the narration equals the revelation of a secret indicated from the beginning of the film by the zoom effects (a desire to know something 'about' Sandra, in other words about this woman as the economic representative of the dead Father, the family that has disappeared, the lever of the narration).

And in *The Damned*:

– the fiction equals the replacement of the bourgeoisie by Nazism, according to a complex principle of succession (parents/children, Martin's uncle/mother, mother/son, homosexuals/heterosexuals, transvestites/military, etc.);

– the narration consists both of the progressive revelation of Martin's sexuality, and simultaneously the story of a series of substitutions of characters for other characters, in which the relations of the signifiers (transvestite/make-up/uniform) are inscribed 1) as an erotic snare (the figure of Marlene is not a woman), as the denotation of masculine homosexuality (the SA orgy); 2) as the mother's death mask and as a wedding dress; 3) as a denotative element of political mastery and as a connotative element of the erotic repression on which the Viscontian discourse is based (Martin).

What is inscribed here, then, is the displacement of a series of screens, in the form of a system of substitutions of one group by another, one sex by another, the covering of a corpse by a mask, a man by a dress, etc.

In order to mark the divergence between the inscription of *Death in Venice* and that of *The Damned*, it is especially important, strategically, to note:

1 *The Damned* very heavily programmes the figuration of the decadence of the bourgeoisie (mask, false counterpart, repressed sexuality, etc.) as it is most acceptable to bourgeois culture, to the advantage of a *mise en scène* of Nazism which constantly excludes the small part of this figuration that might be (badly) received by a bourgeois spectator (because the exterior world of the bourgeoisie in Visconti's film is Nazism, embellished by the displaced attributes of its own decadence).
2 The narration complacently and exhaustively enumerates all the acceptable articulations of the signifiers it inscribes, which is precisely what *Death in Venice* does not do. That is, all the rhymes of the discourse which the bourgeoisie produces about its decadence (mastery equals homosexuality, bourgeoisie equals neurosis, make-up equals death mask, etc.).

This allows us to define the difference between *Death in Venice* and *The Damned*. What is signified in *The Damned* is a series of equivalences between a purely ideological inscription of social relations (the dominant/dominated relation, with no specification of the materiality of the relation and its economic and sexual objects, inscribed in terms of a substitution of one for the other, of the knowledge one has about the other), and the erotic and theatrical connotations of the dominant ideological position (parade, transvestism, homosexuality of the Master); so that the signifiers displace one another, slide 'over' one another without impairing the idealist, metaphysical signifieds of a historical fiction formed by a 'cultural' fabric of these equivalences.

The displacements do not produce any work because there is a foreclosure of the double articulation of this chain, which contains the active nucleus of *Death in Venice*'s text, the nucleus of the sexual and the economic, of a social relation of production and an erotic relation formed out of obsessional neurosis. This double articulation of the text of *Death in Venice* could be expressed as: *I, a clean bourgeois, am in love with a dirty proletarian.* We shall see that the system whereby the signifiers are displaced in the film makes up a kind of gigantic negation of this description.

The fiction of *Death in Venice* consists, in the manner of classical films, of the *mise en scène* of a desire – the inscription of an erotic relation which proceeds through a to-and-fro between the desirer and his object. But it does not actually contain any inscription of the usual figurative attributes of the objects of homosexual desire in Visconti's films, namely:

1 their economic position (servants, proletarians);
2 their erotic fetishization (transvestites).

Any inscription of this kind would have actualized an erotic relationship depicted in its double inscription as: a social relation of economic production/an obscene sexual relationship – the transvestite in Visconti consisting above all (cf. *The Damned*) of a camouflage of the body, a (clean) covering over of the dirtiness of the organs (the inscription of transvestism as always overdetermined by Visconti's obsessional neurosis: the fetish does not appear in place of the foreclosed sexual organs but in place of their 'dirtiness'). Thus we have:

1 Tadzio's asexual, clean physique;
2 Aschenbach's lack of 'mastery' (social power and virility).

But the original depiction persists, displaced on to:

1 the desirer (made up, as a transvestite, but sweating, dirty, his make-up running);
2 a proletarian whore who has the face of Tadzio and of Aschenbach's wife, and thus inscribes both obscenity and its denial;
3 the minor figures, servants, Tadzio's friend, Tadzio the actor (his tough physique);
4 the decor of Venice (contaminated by rain and disinfectant, plague-infested)
5 the foul-mouthed street-singer who sings an obscene song;
6 and twice, Tadzio himself spattered with mud.

The supplement

(a) *Death*. In contrast with what happens in 'classical' cinema, death is not inscribed at the point of articulation of the real/fictive in the discourse (at the point, that is, where the figure is produced as real by an imaginary guarantor [the Absent One]) but, literally, when no one is expecting it. Death can no longer appear as an insert, an incursion, a parenthesis. An example of this is the scene in the station, when the dying figure is inscribed without any living figure having first designated him as real. Death here is this unassimilable supplement which the real/fictive does not take over and repress in the form of a corpse (what is unacceptable is the dead figure, the *corpse*, the signifier [the subject of the real/fictive]).
(b) *Obscenity*. Obscenity is produced by an insistent inscription of the contamination (rain, putrefaction, disinfectant) which affects the decor of Venice, and the decomposition of the characters' faces. And while it is remarkable that there is a constant *displacement* of the contamination from the bodies to the decor, it would be going too far to identify this with what happens, for example, in Bertolucci's *The Conformist*, where the stylistic decomposition of the decor, the pictorial 'regression' of the shots, metaphorically designates social decomposition by means of the equation: ideological superstructures = decorative ornamentation. For in *Death in Venice* the obscenity of the bodies can never *completely* operate as a meta-

phor for social decomposition in that it only appears in the literally sexual episodes (Tadzio and his friend – who in the book is called Jasciu – on the beach, in other words in the shots where the figures in sexual postures are foreclosed from any social determination), episodes which are themselves also inscribed as inserts, standing out from the rest of the film. In the same way, the dirtiness of the decor is always too literal to portray this social degradation effectively; this no doubt derives from the fact that, in the cinema, dirtiness shown as such (cf. the sexual episodes) cannot connote social decadence, while a decor in bad taste (cf. Bertolucci again) can do so very well. Thus the make-up/skin or painting/surface relationship (following a sequence of painting/make-up/mud), instead of acting as a spectacular *mise en scène* effect, becomes the addition of a supplementary (obscene) layer. The make-up scene is exemplary in this respect in formulating, in a way which cannot be improved on, the scatological side of the supplement: 'I shall restore what belongs to you'.

(c) *The real/fictive* (that is, 'what is included in a look') is itself constantly exceeded and compromised. The passage from one shot to another is not made through the intermediary of the look (throughout the film there is total uncertainty about 'who is looking at whom?').

Or rather: the look comes too soon or too late, so that each shot projects a sort of *figurative magma*, inscribed by Visconti in reference to a Proustian phrase (see below), made up of connective tissue which, far from being assimilable by the classical narrative economy (that of a 'sutured' cinema), is in fact symptomatic of its collapse.

Because this *'too soon or too late'* (cf. the scene with the sand: at what precise moment is most of the sand on the other side?) refers us back to:

– the impossibility for Aschenbach of being there at the moment when something (someone, Tadzio) appears. (Cf. the very beginning of the film, on the boat. Aschenbach on a deck chair. Venice approaches. Aschenbach dozes off for a few moments. Arrival at Venice. Aschenbach wakes up: he is *already* in Venice);

– the need to fantasize this *desired moment* according to two complementary modes: being seen and not seeing him and/or seeing him and not being seen.

– The result is that this 'desired moment' (object of desire equals appearance/disappearance of Tadzio), *as an object among others and for others*, is enclosed by arabesques – what we called the connective tissue – whose only function is that of negating (the camera 'chancing' to fix on Tadzio has to make this the point of departure for a movement whose sole purpose is to confirm the 'chance'. Inversely, a camera movement that has already started settles on Tadzio and is abruptly interrupted, as though it could stay there unaffected).

This too soon or too late, then, besides marking the loss of reality in Aschenbach's psychosis (a paranoiac psychosis: blocking off the libido, scatology, fantasies of the end of the world, funny little slapdash characters – cf. Schreber), also has the effect of marking the breakdown of the real/fictive in the narration and the freeing (which derives from it) of a *supplement of the fabric of film, of images.*

(d) *The Name of the Author.*[4] The effects of this breakdown allow us to appreciate the function of what, in the European cinema tradition, we might term the 'Name of the Author'. A tradition which comes out of the cinephiles' discourse about '*auteur* cinema', where the cinephile phantasmically takes the place of the director (making the pleasure of the spectacle the object of his reflections).

The cinephiles' discourse has electively re-marked in Hollywood cinema's *écriture* the effects of the cut/suture of the *mise en scène*, in directors who, in the later Hollywood tradition, had already valorized these effects as figures of style.

What *interests* the cinephiles' discourse, and is the source of the cinephile's hysteric pleasure, is precisely the syncope of the effect of reality and its intervals (being sucked 'into' the shot/being on the other side of the shot). The cinephile phantasmically occupies the place of the director (the place of absence), inasmuch as this place is the one from which the Absent One, the fictive other of classical cinema, produces the scene as real.

In the film practice that stems directly from the cinephile trend (*Breathless*, *Le Beau Serge*) the plotting of the camera, the insistent effects of shooting, have the effect of designating the writer of the film (the camera/eye) no longer as the author of a fiction who understands all the production effects of his *écriture* (in the sutured cinema the author is identified with the fictive other of the *mise en scène*, the Absent One), but as the author of a fiction consisting of the exteriorized relation between a director (a lens + a consciousness) and the filmed objects: in other words, the shooting operation becomes, in this cinema, the fiction itself. The shooting is understood as a fiction of the filmic inscription, an inscription which *fetishizes* what the sutured cinema *foreclosed*: the 'edge' of the filmic icon (the frame), the materiality of the camera's displacement. This fiction consists of the eroticized and/or 'politicized' relation between a look and an object (a political and erotic overdetermination of the function of the Name of the Author, the fetish of the foreclosed writer, of the agent of the production of the filmic inscription). The function of the Name of the Author has thus taken the place of the absent articulation of Hollywood cinema. It has taken up the position of the foreclosure of the agent producing the filmic inscription (the camera/the lens, the cut out screen, the cuts of editing: from a materialist point of view these are in fact the only agents producing the filmic inscription, if we understand by agents of the inscription the signifiers that mark the articulation of the discourse, that serve as its levers).

It is the Name of the Author which thereafter answered for the real-fictive of the *mise en scène*, which safeguarded its ideology at a moment when its institution was threatening to collapse in the ruins of classical narrative economy (the cut/suture articulation). It is the Name of the

Author that has now 'politicized' and eroticized this real-fictive, which was already present in a condensed form in neo-realist cinema (in Rossellini the film as a woman's critical look at the bourgeoisie). In *Death in Venice*, however, the insistent effects of the shooting, the camera's twisting path, thwart the effect of the real-fictive, even though Visconti, more than in any of his other films, has inscribed the two terms of classical narration (a character and his object, alternately absent and present), but without inscribing them as his *agents* or his levers: neither Aschenbach nor Tadzio is an agent of the operating of the cut/suture in the *mise en scène*. They operate as levers of the too soon-too late fiction, constantly shifted in relation to a camera track that makes a metaphor of their relationship (ocular caress, tactile caress/camera eye, camera brush).

This metaphor-making constitutes a denial of the erotic relationship between the author and his actor (a more 'direct' approach to the filming, more centred on Tadzio, would have risked making the film unacceptable), and sets up a distortion, which *in fact* compromises the function of the Name of the Author (which consists of eroticizing and politicizing the *mise en scène* without inscribing any exterior other than the fantasy of a spectator who puts himself in the author's place). A distortion between:

1 the function of the Name of the Author as a support for the spectator's political/erotic fantasy (Bresson, Mardore);

2 the function of the Name of the Author as an agent of the passage from one shot to another, a support of the real/fictive of the *mise en scène* threatened with collapse.

Since in fact, despite Visconti's 'intentions', what appears in the trajectory of the filming is the erotic relationship between the real agent of the filming and his actor, rather than the erotic relationship between Aschenbach and Tadzio. The relationship, that is, of this real agent whose economic and sexual inscription has always been foreclosed in the system of *representation* (cf. *Las Meninas*: what is foreclosed, in whose place the real-fictive of the representation is produced, is the material inscription of an economic and political relationship overdetermined by religious ideology: the Debt – the relation determined by the Debt – the eye which designates the King as foreclosed from the painting, as receiver of the Debt, in whose place there sits, in a hallucinatory manner, the spectator to whom the obeisance is addressed).[5]

The failure of the denial

It would be tempting to see in Visconti's work – the releasing of *too much* matter, excrescences without an object – a sort of key, a belated theorization of a whole area of modern cinema which would thereby be destroyed forever, comprehended and passed by. Now, apart from the fact that there is no question of our falling down into the ideology of the 'mastered text' (see *Tristana, The Clowns*), we are not saying that these excrescences – surplus to the fiction – are for that reason useless, put there with a view to cinephile consumption. To raise this question, and respond to it, is to say: if there is denial in *Death in Venice*, we should find out what it is a denial of.

As distinct from the earliest films (*La terra trema*) representing a homosexual desire, and so repressing it (principle of the *mise en scène*: it cannot be inscribed there as such), *Death in Venice* is striking first for a return of repressed homosexuality, not so much in its sentimental and moralizing form (its valorizing form: cf. *Les Amis*), but as a cultural, ideologically valorized theme, an image of the character of the bourgeoisie in the twilight of its decline (Proust). Visconti has been concerned not to deny homosexuality, but to make sure that one of its characteristics (the scatological) never affects the film's erotic scene but is constantly displaced on to *all* the other scenes. These surplus elements of the film, its (scatological) excrescences etc. – and this is their function – only encroach into all the scenes of the film the better to protect *one* scene, which is occupied by a character (Tadzio) as clean and translucent as everything around him is corroded by putrefaction and crumbling away under its make-up. A privileged position and a privilege we must query so as to respond to it by pointing out a double repression:

- the dirtiness of the object of desire
- the position of the proletarian as object of desire.

We know that Freud saw in the paranoiac symptom different ways of denying a proposition which he formulated thus: I (a man) love him (a man). If Aschenbach is in effect paranoiac, this means that, like Schreber, he passes directly from the repression to the sublimation of homosexuality (cf. the 'platonic' discourse in Mann's text) on the basis that this is the end of the world. But Visconti knows more about this than Aschenbach (just as he knows that the end of the world is only ever the end of one world, his own, the bourgeoisie) and what Visconti knows – but cannot say – might be formulated, articulating the double repression, as a proposition like:

I (a bourgeois) love him (a proletarian) – because he is dirty.

A proposition that can be denied in at least two ways:

- He is not a proletarian, he is *actually precisely the opposite*; he is an aristocrat (in this sense, the Proustian reference is pertinent. We are thinking, for example, of a passage like the one where 'M. de Charlus dines at the big hotel with a footman recognized as such by the servants'. On the other hand, the traces of the displacement remain: a certain toughness about Tadzio, or his friend Jasciu who *is* a proletarian).
- It is not he who is dirty, it is *I* who am dirty. In line with Visconti's 'Marxist' ideology, Aschenbach represents the bourgeoisie as a corrupted class.

The barred question, the one which causes and will continue to cause a problem, is therefore not homosexuality, but rather: how can the bourgeoisie, being unable to escape from itself, fail to fantasize the proletariat, the lost (but also dirty, shameful) part of the social body, whose return and emergence it can only desire in an erotic manner?

And what would ruin a film like *Death in Venice* is simply this: not being able to say, without serious scandal, what is said elsewhere (Bataille, Genet, Guyotat) in the midst of enormous difficulties.

The threatening exterior of the film's fiction, which Visconti will not allow himself – *what the film-maker will not allow himself to inscribe* – and which forms an unacceptable proposition for the bourgeois spectator, is therefore the articulation, *active in his film* but censored, of a double inscription:

1 sexual (scatological);
2 economic/erotic (the desire of the bourgeoisie for the proletariat).

This may be read as the symptom of the repression of the bourgeois economic system: in its fantasies, the neurotic bourgeoisie desires the agents of economic production, since they produce the thing that supports the bourgeoisie's real mastery (surplus-value). But the *écriture* of this desire in fact acts on ideology, because it transgresses the institution of the image of the master (in the nineteenth century, the bourgeois boss, a model of humanity for the proletariat – today, 'management' as the specular image of a petit bourgeois society), because it *attributes* to an other (*who is the real outside of its social system*) the object which returns to the place of its own foreclosure (the inscription of the break, the *debt* – the original mark of the election of the capitalist – *foreclosed* with the coming of the Rights of Man).

We have to broaden the Bataille inscription: the dirty organs of the proletariat are the obsessional condensation of the fetishist inscription of the phallus/excrement. In the eyes of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat not only has the phallus (perversion), and a dirty anus (obsessional neurosis), but is also, *in* the text of its inscription, the phallus and the excrement as the little thing alternately and at the same time included in the body and produced/expelled by that body. The signifiers, which are the signifiers of the erogenous body, are thus inscribed in the text of a discourse which constitutes what is repressed in the economic system (and which, as such, can only work through the analytical deconstruction of bourgeois ideology). This text *exteriorizes* the body, its organs and its products. It is politically transgressive in so far as, by exteriorizing the body, it inscribes the discourse of an *obscene master*, and thus transcends by far the normally accepted bourgeois obscenity, which never inscribes a relation of economic domination. Bourgeois obscenity, for example that commonplace item of the obsessional cinephile 'avant-garde' which consists of shitting on screen, in fact compromises only the specular identification, the narcissism of the bourgeois spectator. What is compromised here is both this narcissism and the real political position which it inscribes under cover. This is why the analytical deconstruction of this persistent inscription must still be made, in so far as in a bourgeois society which has not accomplished its economic/political revolution the *analytical description* of this symptomatic production forms the only *outside/real* of its ideology. Real and outside because it constitutes the dialectical reversal of the ideology, which institutes the subject as transcending its material signifiers (the body, economic products), and because it teaches these subjects what they do not want to know about any area (bourgeois economy and sexuality) whose inscription it forms, and which its writers, like its theoretical producers, violently reject at a precise moment in the history of class struggle.

Translated by Joseph Karmel

Notes

1 The French is 'à la recherche du bourgeois': the Proustian echo is of course impossible to render in English, given the familiarity of the English title of Proust's work.

2 Here, the myth of Oedipus, as always (it is an ideological constant in bourgeois fiction), but rewritten from Laius's side. The Theban plague (Asiatic cholera) is present in its full mythic dimension, but its role is *inverted*: in precise terms, it is the magic guarantee of Gustav von Aschenbach's inversion, the lever of this inversion and at the same time its clearest sign (the sequential nature of the revelation, made to Aschenbach by the bank clerk, of the existence of cholera in Venice is the kernel of the fiction, and a great deal could be said about it, except that it is pre-Freudian). (Authors' note.)

3 Ch. 19 in this volume.

4 In this account of authorship, the traditional figure of the author is re-inscribed within the post-structuralist problematics. 'The Name of the Author' alludes to the Lacanian formulation 'Name of the Father' (in turn a reformulation of the mythic, symbolic Father that anchors the law; hence the figure of total authority. Since the figure is constituted through his murder, the Name of the Father undergoes a primal and continuing repression, figured metaphorically through the Symbolic Order by denial. (See Wilden, 'Lacan and the Discourse of the Other', *The Language of the Self*, pp. 270–2.) Here the 'supplement' is a term derived from Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, especially Chapter 2: ' . . . that Dangerous Supplement'; 'whether it adds on or substitutes itself, the supplement is exterior, outside the positivity to which it is super-added'. The supplement as the presence of the author as technique functions here as a fetish, one that denies the politics of class on which the modern European cinema is founded. In this way, Daney and Oudart continue and transform the early *Cahiers* auteurism.

5 Velázquez's *Las Meninas* is discussed by Oudart in his 'Notes for a Theory of Representation', Ch. 15 in this volume.

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Pascal Kané: 'Re-reading Hollywood Cinema: *Sylvia Scarlett*'

('Relecture du cinéma hollywoodien: *Sylvia Scarlett*', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 238–9, May–June 1972)

Here we propose to continue the current theoretical study of 'classical Hollywood cinema',[1] which until now has been the object of an empirical, fragmented knowledge of little productive value for an understanding of contemporary films claiming to belong to the same system. One of the reasons why this work is necessary certainly lies in the block now observable in this kind of cinema at its present juncture; in other words, the inability of its products, despite their obvious and ludicrous wish to be different at all costs, to break away from a model of fictional operation where any 'individual revolt' can only be reabsorbed by and into an acceptance of the rigid constraints implied by that model. Constraints which are never stated as such, and in this sense characteristic of the action of the kind of ideology which programmes them.[2]

To 'forget' the constraints of the film-makers' narrative work – work that consists in setting up a kind of reading device which will guarantee the naturalization of the narrative-form, and the laws governing the representative scene – is to circumscribe this work, carried out within certain conventional modes, within increasingly narrow areas: mainly as connotation – signifying the dominant presence of the director as 'auteur' (as opposed to the 'craftsman' of the 1930s and 1940s) and made up of all the manipulations allowed by the simple combinatory of fictional motifs. Still banished from the Hollywood horizon, on the other hand, is any practice that aims to transform the status of the narration, that would involve challenging the settled relationship between the spectator and the work (a relationship so ideologically 'loaded' that even those film-makers most committed to the 'system' work to disguise it).[3]

The structure of this narrative model still has enough potential to be remade today in its essentials. Our aim now is to read what this structure ordains for a film of the 1930s (*Sylvia Scarlett*, 1934), a time when Hollywood cinema was booming and still fashioning some of its great myths (the Star), and when the pressure for 'newness' – though inseparable from the problem of the 'classic' – was not yet being sharply felt[4] (in short, the period when the model was being refined and there was no desire yet to vary it).

Such an approach presents an obvious drawback: that of analysing a filmic *system* (a text) while still speaking of cinematic narrative *codes*. If the method is shaky, we can nevertheless find a justification for it, beyond acknowledging its empirical constraints: that it brings into play a certain density specific to the classical 'text', which, as we shall see, never exists except in opposition to the laws of the model which pre-exists it.

There are two kinds of reason for our particular concern with *Sylvia Scarlett*:

1 As an exemplary classic text in which the erotic scene is predominant, repressing the other determinations. But those elements in the film that will be attributed to a work of *écriture*, and that relate exclusively to the way the trajectory of the bodies (of Sylvia and her father) is inscribed, produce effects of transgression on the underlying classic narrative model, thus allowing us both:

- to read between the lines the 'place' of this model;
- to bring to light the contradiction, never mastered and never really thought through by Hollywood, between the model and the nature of the scriptural work.

2 The work done by Cukor on the actor's physical presence and performance gives us a special opportunity to locate the hero's nodal function in the setting up of the model. The actor's performance should not here be simply read as such (as in the theatre), but reinvested in the narrative mechanism. The different types of stylization in performance adopted by Hollywood ought one day to be classified and characterized according to period – and according to *auteurs*, and there is a need to examine how they relate to the different types of story to which they correspond. In the absence of any such typology, we shall confine ourselves here to considering the hero as a whole, while noting the extent to which Katharine Hepburn-Sylvia's disguise and the displacement-perversion of her acting (itself reinscribed as such throughout the fiction) are linked with the film's narrative working and the way in which the spectator is erotically involved in it.

1 Place and function of the Hero

In what forms a sort of prologue to the story proper, we learn that Sylvia and her father have to leave town to escape from the police, who are looking for them. To this end Sylvia, whose mother has just died, disguises herself as a boy. The social definition of the characters is also blurred, and their real place in society is made marginal.

We are here presented with the most 'evident' condition for the functioning of the classical narrative (linked in this case to the 'guilt' of the

Scarlett father): namely, the hero's obligation to define himself as being different from the community as a whole so that he can exist as a hero. A new definition which is in fact simply an *indefinition*, since it is precisely by abandoning their 'natural' social role within the community (their concrete work) that Sylvia and her father acquire the status of heroes. This is a fate shared by all main characters: their privileged place is explained simply by the 'extraordinary' event which has propelled them into it, investing them with a fictional density which immediately cancels the 'triviality' of their initial situation (class status, family relationships). A chance event thus assumes a structural value through the function bestowed on it; a function which, though systematized, is never so in the sense of the 'salutary' external shock, the unexpected revelation of unseen contradictions, as it would be to some extent in a non-Hollywood cinema which had 'benefited' – whatever the real application might have been – from the lessons of Brechtianism. (The opposite can be seen in *North by Northwest*, almost a theoretical model of a film assuming a total erogenizing of the field as a conscious effect of the constant arbitrariness of all narrative – of narrative as 'acting out'; a film where the 'gratuitousness' of the sequence of events continually re-focuses and loses a body which is forever trying to escape from the same obsessive menace.) This constant element of classical Hollywood cinema is nevertheless avoided by film-makers like Vidor and Kazan, who have come under certain European influences and whose fictions are not conceived in terms of an exclusively erotic scene. This said, even Kazan's 'journey' films (*Wild River, America America . . .*) never set the contradiction in an area that is primarily or genuinely socio-political, remaining locked inside an ethical view of the individual/nature-society conflict.

The Hollywood hero, then, is generally excluded from any class antagonism. He is a hero who enables the real contradictions to be considered in their controlled displacement, on grounds more 'appropriate' to him. And he is never superseded by these 'contradictions', which are made to measure for him, in a natural homogeneity which cancels out any genuine dialectic between the subject and the group in their contradictory and heterogeneous claims.

For example, through a suturing effect specific to the hero, there is an avoidance of the contradiction between the 'natural' fixedness of the social roles attached to individuals and the trans-social course entered on by the hero, in which the effect of his presence causes the double conflict in play to be glossed over (an intra-ideological conflict between the reproduction through ideology of existing social schemas and the pseudo-transcendence by the individual that is promoted by the ideology of free enterprise: a conflict between the involvement of the social subject and the subject of desire).

The exemplary quality of the film hero thus fulfils, through identification, a very well documented and necessary ideological function: that of assigning the spectator his true place in the production process (this is the 'order of things' in its 'natural' fixedness as shown in films), while at the same time denying that this is what is being done (because the hero happens to 'contradict' this order, while justifying it by his very status). Cf., in this connection, Thomas Herbert:

> The metaphorical effect consists in a displacement of signification which plays a role in the 'basic system' (primary, economic): the economic law which assigns to the agent of production his *position* in the production process is thus *suppressed and disguised* within other signifying chains whose effect is both to *signify* this position to the subject-agent of production without his being able to escape from it, *and* to hide from him the fact that the position is assigned to him. In other words, the metaphorical effect produces significations by displacing them.[5]

The hero's real place has therefore to be thought of as a function of the ideological effect of homogenization which his pseudo-difference sets up. The suturing of the social group, the disappearance of even the possibility of an antagonism other than the inter-individual, derives from the exceptional position which the hero occupies, the function of which is clearly to reinforce the rule which produces him. The erotic impact of the hero on the spectators makes any other form of 'exceptional' status within the fiction impossible, since he (and only he) is in a position to *resolve* the conflicts (in a position of mastery) without ever calling on any external circumstance or himself being caught up in real contradictions (which are not, or are not resolved by, issues of conscience). (Recent Hollywood fictions which contrive to deprive the hero of his mastery do not in any way contradict this schema, the place in question being presented precisely as unoccupied, as already taken by another: director, spectator.) Only by setting out a *heterogeneity of terms* in which desire would come up against a reality that is not simply phantasmal (and which, correlatively, would entail the disappearance of the master position) could the 'classical' cinema make the place and the 'positivity' of the hero in the fiction a relative one. A film like *Under the sign of the scorpion*,[6] which is still very close to 'European classicism' despite the absence of a central character, does bring into conflict the characters' multiple split between, for example, unconscious desire and the need to take account of the reality of conditions of subsistence. As for the characters' individual unconscious, it is itself *heteronomous* (structured by a particular society and dialectically connected to it).[7]

2 $ylvi(a)[8]

Let us now make a reading of the main sequences of the film starting from what is entailed by the placing of the hero at centre-stage. First, the brief opening, in which an exemplary hero-character is immediately set up through the fictional potential brought into play by the initial imbalance of her situation: death of the mother, discovery of the father's swindling, and the need to run from the police.

The mother's disappearance (literally: Sylvia burns the last of her personal effects), which provides the narrative's starting-point, is in fact a substitute for its cause: the fantasy of an incestuous desire which it releases in Sylvia, in accordance with the Oedipal logic that marks classical Hollywood cinema, comes very close to being fulfilled (taking the mother's sexual place with the father) only to be progressively repressed through the action of deferment. This is the function of the *second* event (the need to leave town), whose unexpected occurrence (the celebrated arbitrariness of the narrative) should not hide a double necessary condition: on the one hand a 'structural' one (the operation of transforming raw desire – the desire which cannot remain identical with itself – taken up by the network of narrative codes); and on the other hand one of *positioning*, its secondary status within the signifying chain hypostasizing Desire as the principal, if not the sole, cause, to the detriment of a social scene which is not at any time acknowledged to be fully at stake.

It is therefore on a sexual scene that the programme as set out has to be carried through. Having lost her place in the family, Sylvia also leaves behind her identity, in the process becoming Sylvester. Denying a newly dawning femininity, she cuts off her plaits, from then on playing out the game of this provisional castration. A castration which, by suspending the character's desire, confirms her in the 'place' of the hero who not only sutures the social group without belonging to it, but locates the spectator in his position of hysteric petitioner, by becoming the privileged object of his desire.

The plaits, then, are well and truly cut off: the hoax is not entirely confined to 'appearances' since something in the body has been affected. That this gesture threatens the narcissistic pleasure which sustains the spectator's relationship with the actor (based on specular identification) is confirmed by the subsequent adventures of the hero: the representation (or the actor's assumption of speech) is here more than a simple mask – something connected with 'being' is momentarily suspended, 'put at stake'.

Having escaped what hitherto marked their real place in society – their status as workers – the protagonists refine their new position by adopting a 'theory' which justifies it: 'The world is divided into hawks and sheep,' they say, 'so let's be hawks!' An 'almost' materialist theory, which in any event remodels social relationships into a topological metaphor of highs and lows, running throughout the film (it can be followed from the artist's upper-storey bedroom to which Sylvia climbs, to the rocky coastline from which her father throws himself) and referring more to a moral than to a political order.

Nevertheless, the implicit affirmation of the 'ideological community' of all the secondary figures in the film – which, as we said, it is the hero's function to establish through his position of exception – is re-marked a little later in such a way that his role as lure is exposed in spite of himself. We see Cary Grant (a 'hawk' candidate who soon reinstates himself in the sheep camp for lack of grace, i.e. of 'class'), the Scarlett father, and Sylvia, playing out a scenario which is destined to hoodwink those who allow themselves to sympathize. On a London street, still disguised as a boy, Sylvia complains publicly about an English gentleman she has followed in the hope of taking a job he has promised her, and who has now disappeared with her savings. Sylvia's accomplices – one disguised as a lord, the other as a businessman – incite the now sympathetic crowd to come to her aid. One can see in this scene elements of a real social analysis: the characters are in a 'real' situation (worker and boss clinching a sham contract), and their interests clash. But this antagonism is at once cancelled out by the two partners who work on wheedling out of the crowd that has gathered in united moral reprobation something to help the worker who has been robbed. So we have a new ideological community, but one of the most artificial kind, one which in fact profits only the organizers of this collective outpouring (who have created a community out of nothing).

Thus the reality of a social antagonism and the principal characters' function as ideological levers have first to be *made unreal* by the fiction so that they can be represented (it is a staged coup, not a real event). A mechanism which to some extent equals the denial which allows what has been repressed to re-emerge in the subject.

If the hero is in fact one who, under his mask, can cross with impunity the divisions (sexual, social) which are sutured into a universal community by the effect of his presence, then clearly nothing prevents the classical Hollywood fiction from bringing opposing social classes together. The interest of the film, then, derives from the fact that the effect of the mask and lure of the hero – its achievement – is here reinvested in the fiction: Sylvia moves through the narrative in her mask *and keeps it until the end*. Once disguised, she takes on the character of her disguise:

- by miming her provisional castration, she excludes herself from the order of desire, thereby becoming the phallus (she is desired by all);
- by playing out the game of her various costumes, she also excludes herself from the social order (she is the only one not to be signified by her clothes: *there is nothing behind her 'appearance'*).

As a seemingly 'ideal' hero, whose function is not to be *in* the representation, but to make the representation function *as such, for someone* (and then fade), Sylvia has only one 'fault': that of lasting, of not being put in her place (on the contrary, she is constantly looking for this place in vain, being consequently too much in the picture: cf. the swindling scenes which she spoils by upsetting the plans, and then her inability to abandon her role).

As a counterpoint to the hero's itinerary here (the one who assumes his castration), we may note that of the fallen father, driven out of his place, dispossessed of his power by another – Cary Grant (see for example the episode of the lace being given up to the customs) – and pursued by a law which he no longer embodies; his course is symmetrical to that of his daughter, but ends in a definitive castration (death). This placing of imposture – necessary to the process of 'heroification in' that it affects the hero by a more or less baleful negative double (traitors, false friends, rivals), the benefit of whose effects of fascination he appropriates to himself[9] – is here demeaned by reason of its *impropriety*. Sexually inscribed from the outset of the fiction as Sylvia's fantasy object of desire – in other words in a scandalous, forbidden place – the Scarlett father can only grotesquely mime masculinity for a woman who is herself a parody of femininity (the maid). The law allows only one alternative: to embody it or to submit to it. The hero alone is granted the possibility of opening it up.

The hero's suturing effect, programmed by the narrative model, is set in motion by the fiction and in *Sylvia Scarlett* can be read *in its ideological function* (and this time without going through the guarantee of the story's working out) through the initial excess in the inscription of the character; in other words, the dislocation between the character and her function, indicated by the *supplement of writing*[10] in her disguise (mask and mutilation, which can be added to and subtracted from without these two operations cancelling one another out: the plaits cut off stand for the supposedly acquired masculinity; the signifier is not added up, it goes into circulation), constitutes the mark – the remainder – wherein the supplement is signified.

This is a supplement which disturbs the whole development of the narrative, even in the most conventional moments of this type of fiction. The episode of Sylvia's meeting with the painter (who belongs to the 'upper class' – in a situation of non-work or 'noble' work), which enables her definitively to leave her original milieu, is in fact no longer reducible to the original ideological model (triumph of love over social divisions), nor indeed to the classic Cukor theme of social climbing.[11] The supplement of writing on the body of Sylvia is never wholly dispelled (she never affirms her true sex or, later, gets rid of her disguise); and her relations with the painter, which exist only on the level of a denied desire, remain out of key until the end, the imbalance being displaced in the film's final sequence on to the other couple who have been provisionally established (Cary Grant and the Countess). An ending which is all the more hesitant (even if perfectly conventional) because the narrative had pointed to another one a few moments previously, one which was more in line with the narrative scheme it seemed to be following (the two couples being the painter-the Countess and Cary Grant-Sylvia): it was all about to be tied together with the displacement/transformation of Sylvia's desire for her father into a desire for the one who takes his place – Cary Grant. In branching off at the last moment, through a twist of fate – the Countess' suicide – whose exteriority to the narration is striking, the story deviates from a course whose 'normality' it re-marks in passing but access to which is barred by an excess that derives from the character of Sylvia and is not reducible to the pre-existing ideological model. The final complication in the conduct of the new couple formed by Sylvia and the painter points symptomatically to the distortion in the use of the narrative codes in operation, in their function of effacing the scriptural trace. The resistance offered by Sylvia's body – a consequence of the erogenous-scriptural existence it preserves to the end – to its *unwriting* [*désécriture*], in other words to the repressive return of the model, marks the impossibility of subtracting this 'aberrant' supplement – 'aberrant' because it has never been imagined by the classical economy.

Translated by David Wilson

Notes

1 Cf. in particular the recent texts by J.-P. Oudart and S. Daney. (Author's note.) See Oudart's 'Un discours en défaut', *Cahiers* 232, Ch. 19 in this volume, and Daney and Oudart's 'Le Nom-de-l'Auteur', *Cahiers* 234–5, Ch. 22 in this volume.

2 Compare with the 'metonymic process' defined by Thomas Herbert, which governs the relations of 'subjects' and the syntactical signifying organization in which they are held: '*positioning of subjects within the syntactical structure* and *the omission of that positioning* by the mechanism of identification of the subject with the body of the structure, enabling that structure to be reproduced' ('Observations on a general theory of ideologies', *Cahiers pour l'analyse* no. 9). (Author's note.)

3 Cf. for example Don Siegel's *The Beguiled*, *Cahiers* 232. (Author's note.)

4 Note however that George Cukor came from Broadway, and that the theatre had brought him a certain reputation between 1925 and 1930 ('The Great Gatsby' 1926, 'The Constant Wife', 'The Furies'). (Author's note.)

5 Herbert, op. cit., p. 88. (Author's note.)

6 *Sotto il segno dello scorpione*, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, 1969.

7 On this point also Thomas Herbert's text opens up some perspectives: 'It is therefore clear that an analysis of the ideological forms of existence supported by the "concrete" subjects of a given social formation involves something quite different from a pure observation of their speech and actions, and that we have to try to go back to the mechanism by which the forms of existence of subjective individuality are elaborated, where this mechanism is in fact concealed. . . . Provided we recognize that the unconscious is neither individual nor collective but structural, it becomes possible to envisage the Freudian unconscious as a specific effect of the unconscious law as we understand it; in the sense that the reproduction of ideological processes would essentially include the moment when each human subject reproduces the operation of imposition/dissimulation, through the "spoken", the "noise" or the family "legend". In this way the structurally necessary requirements, inscribed in the law, for the reproduction of man as a work force would be realized . . .' (Author's note.)

8 $ indicates the barred subject in Lacanian terminology, that is the subject's division from itself consequent upon castration and the introduction into desire; hence the subject in relation to the unconscious. The '(a)' refers to Lacan's theory of a set of objects ('*objets petit a*') not fully differentiated from the self,

objects that are identified with a partial lack of the subject. Here the spelling $ylvi(a) indicates the Lacanian terms of analysis of her complex situation.

9 A double which, in Daney, corresponds to the one 'who takes the place of the Other', and indeed defined as a 'puppet' (*Cahiers* 236–7, p. 35). (Author's note.) The text referred to is 'L'écran du fantasme'.

10 'Supplement of writing' refers to Derrida's analysis of the supplement as an additional presence to a constituting absence.

11 A theme which should nevertheless not be underestimated: Cukor is one of the few Hollywood film-makers whose films never reject class opposition for more 'noble' themes; on the contrary they are constantly sharpened, the 'realism' and pettiness of many of his characters making it possible to remain within an area of very concrete calculations. (Author's note.)

24 Editorial: 'Politics and Ideological Class Struggle'

('Politique et lutte idéologique de class: Intervention 1', *Cahiers du Cinéma* 234–5, December 1971–January–February 1972)

1 Historical survey

The last issue of *Cahiers* set forth a number of propositions which implied a political and ideological stance; these propositions need to be made more explicit. Their scattered and disconnected nature (J.-P. Lebel's arguments are qualified as 'revisionist' in Pascal Bonitzer's 'Fétichisme de la technique', the Second Declaration of Poretta-Terme makes explicit reference to the contribution of the Chinese Cultural Revolution),[1] and above all the fact that they are not accompanied by any political analysis, allowed their status to remain equivocal. The object of this text is to eliminate this temporary ambiguity, starting with the following clarification: the propositions in question do not come from individual, isolated points of view; they are not 'authors' opinions', but reflect the editorial position of this magazine.[2]

This position – this stance – is founded on an analysis of ideological and political contradictions whose parameters we will not try to establish on the level of the principal political contradiction. In the coming months we will examine specific contradictions in the cultural domain.

It goes without saying that the charge of 'revisionism' levelled against J.-P. Lebel extends well beyond both Lebel and his work in the area of cinema. The accusation is aimed first and foremost at the revisionist cultural politics of the Communist Party of France, of which Lebel's book (published by Editions Sociales and, of course, supported by the Party press) is both symptom and reflection. It is doubtless useful to make this clear, since up to now our analyses of Lebel's theses (notably in J.-L. Comolli's series of articles, 'Technique et Idéologie)[3] have criticized him for granting autonomy to cinematic technique without taking into account its political and ideological overdetermination, but they have not sufficiently related his arguments to the cultural 'line' of the Communist Party of France.

But for all that, the question is not one of criticizing 'revisionism' in the cultural domain as if this were an autonomous field. Cultural revisionism can only be considered as a reflection of the *political* revisionism of the PCF [French Communist Party]. This text will be devoted to a direct (and no longer masked or oblique) critique of that revisionism.

Thus defined, our position does not, obviously, drop out of the clear blue sky. It has a history and it has causes which we must now analyse.

The causes are of two orders, internal and external. The former arise, essentially, from contradictions proper to this magazine and from its relations with various cultural organs of the Communist Party, and notably with the *Nouvelle Critique*.

The intervention of Marxism-Leninism in this magazine (cf. 'Cinéma/Idéologie/Critique', *Cahiers* 216 and 217, October and November 1969, and the interview with *Politique-Hebdo, Cahiers* 229, on the battles that followed this intervention) implied not only taking account of historical and dialectical materialism in the specific projects of *Cahiers* (elaboration of a materialist theory of cinema, ideological struggle within the field of cinema), but also posing the question of the relationship between this work and current political struggles and therefore demanding an analysis of those struggles. The analysis was not performed. Or, rather, it was deferred in the name of an erroneous conception of ideological struggle as autonomous relative to political struggle and as having priority over it; the latter therefore was 'put off'.

In reaction against the dominant anti-communism of film criticism – and against the former anti-communism of *Cahiers* itself (in all its forms: reactionary, liberal, anarchist both of the left and of the right), and because of the necessity – felt as urgent – to combat eclecticism within the magazine, the Communist Party seemed at the time (after the disintegration of the May 1968 movement) to be the only force with a coherent strategy *vis à vis* the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, the mechanistic, anti-theoretical stance of all so-called leftist groups[4] and – because of the dominance of Althusserian positions during this period – an overestimation of theoretical praxis led us to take into consideration the interest that certain Communist intellectuals expressed in the researches of the avant-garde, and thus to think that we could work together. An insufficient and politically incorrect analysis led us to think that the progressive elements of the Party could win out in an internal struggle – despite our fundamental disagreement with the Party's cultural positions (eclectic, liberal, reactionary) and despite our reservations (which never appeared in the magazine) concerning aspects of its political line.

Thus occurred our reconciliation with the Communist Party, its culmination marked by a collective analysis of *La Vie est à nous* (*Cahiers* 218) which took up, word-for-word and uncritically, the film's theses (the theses of the PCF during the period of the Popular Front and, today, *about* the Popular Front).[5]

But very rapidly, a contradiction emerged in the field of criticism and theory between our desire (which was political, depending on an incomplete analysis that censored all contradictions) to reconcile ourselves with the PCF and our disagreement, which became constantly more clear and total (theoretical, critical, ideological), with its cultural line and above all with the concrete manifestations of that line in our own specific area of interest.[6]

Hence the silence which was in the end the chief mark of our political *rapprochement*, a silence determined by our concern not to play 'the game of anti-communism'. (There was a blind spot as far as the other aspect of this contradiction is concerned; it is well known that the PCF constantly resorts to this game, in an ever more stereotyped fashion, particularly against intellectuals.)[7]

Thus, one year after our break with Filipacchi, our position remained one of general approbation of the political-economic line of the PCF, without any concrete analysis of the specific situation, and of radical disagreement with its cultural line, the latter thought of as: (1) relatively autonomous; (2) in a backward (usual) and distorted position in relation to its political line; and (3), above all, torn apart by violent internal struggles between a faction favourable to the avant-garde and concerned about dialectical materialism and a conservative, eclectic, and reactionary wing.

In other words, we repressed the cultural contradictions in the name of a strategy of support for the avant-garde faction of the Party, and we repressed the political contradiction by refusing to recognize a fundamental incompatibility between our passive approval of the Party's politics and our consideration of the Chinese position. (Our interest was scarcely political in that it was, rather, an exclusively theoretical interest in Mao's thought and the Cultural Revolution.) On the general political level, as on the level of our own practice, our attitude towards revisionism was itself revisionist (the politics of the PCF were seen as reformable).

It was with the 'Manifesto' signed jointly by *Cahiers*, *Tel Quel*, and *Cinéthique* (January 1971)[8] that these differences of opinion, which until then had only appeared sporadically, despite their gravity, were set forth for the first time for what they were: a wholesale disagreement with the cultural politics of the French Communist Party.[9]

This disagreement, however, remained imprisoned within a *political* opportunism, which consisted of not making the connection between the cultural and political lines of the PCF, but pretending that they were autonomous. Or rather (and more seriously), the notion that the political exists as the 'outside' of the field of culture, exerting pressure upon it, *does* appear in this text, but in a sufficiently veiled fashion ('A correct political position, taken by united democratic forces, could in no circumstances . . .') to maintain an ambiguity as to *which* politics are to be the goal: the PCF's political line, or some 'other' line (based on alliances, correct) which *could* or *could have* ('could in no circumstances . . .') exist(ed).

At this point therefore (February 1971), the period of underground discussions and of critiques limited to cultural issues ended. Although it was still hesitant and measured,[10] the announcement of a disagreement with the general line of the PCF had to open out into a consideration of the principal contradiction:

1 the cultural line of the Party was absolutely not autonomous but could only be the reflection of an erroneous political line;
2 the Party's political line, not its cultural line, is what ensures that truly avant-garde cultural enterprises cannot progress from dominated to dominant.

It was at this time (Summer-Autumn 1971), in the aftermath of the political consequences of the three magazines' 'manifesto', that a certain number of external factors intervened to accelerate the development of these contradictions to the point of complete antagonism.

First – a minor symptom but one that confirmed our analyses – the Party's publications launched numerous attacks, of varying degrees of directness, against us. These attacks never confronted the central issues at stake, nor (of course) did they criticize our work for what it was. Rather, they made allusions to our 'theoreticism' and accused us of guilt by association, through the convenient label of 'leftists'. At the very least, they outrageously misinterpreted our positions.[11] Another aspect that these fundamentally reactionary attacks had in common was to appear systematically in the course of what amounted to a promotional campaign for Lebel's book, presented as Marxist 'good sense' as opposed to our 'idealist castles in the air'. (Cervoni and Maurin have never talked so much about *Cahiers*' 'idealism' – nor even just about idealism – as they have since this magazine's adoption of Marxist-Leninist positions.) This 'promotion' was as tardy (Lebel's book had appeared in May) as it was massive, coming after a rather long period of circumspect silence on the part of Party intellectuals. It thus marked a closing of ranks around Lebel's theses, which were presented as orthodox thinking; the result of this regrouping was that contradiction, already present on a theoretical level, could not help but be aggravated and extended *overtly* to the level of ideology and politics (which, we now know, regulates the rest).

It was in fact the contradictions proper to our specific area of interest which made manifest our antagonism *first* to the Party's cultural line, *then* to its political line. But this does not mean that such a chronological order represents for us an *order of importance* (i.e. that the blockages of the cultural field effected by the political line were of primary interest to us). Nor does it mean that if, by some 'liberal' evolution (of the sort presented by the Italian Communist Party), this political line had allowed more 'room' for controversy over cultural politics, our position would have been different. As our analyses progressed (leading to the certainty that the Chinese experience was correct; its practical and theoretical results were even of great help in our analyses), it was on the *political* level that our rupture with the Party was consummated and that any compromise with its counter-revolutionary line came to be unacceptable to us.

At the same time that it hardened its 'superstructural' positions, the PCF increased its attacks against the politics of the Chinese Communist Party and against the principles and results of the Cultural Revolution. The banning of Macciocchi's book, *De la Chine*, from the *L'Humanité* occasion was certainly a conspicuous and outrageous symptom of this, but no more important or less *logical* than, for example, the 'survey of the Chinese Question' carried out in two slanderous articles in *L'Humanité* on 30 September and 1 October.[12]

Thus, what became evident at this point was a stress on revisionary coherence in the general politics of the PCF, which has since been constantly reconfirmed. (Cf. 'De la Chine et des racines de la sinophilie occidentale' in *Nouvelle Critique* no. 47, to which we shall come back, and also no. 49 of the same publication, where revisionism attempts to face all theoretical and ideological fronts: theories of ideologies, theories of literature, cinema, the Ideological State Apparatuses in secondary and university education, and so on.)

This stress on coherence on the one hand and, on the other, the publication in the press of fragments from the anti-revisionist manifesto of the 'Movement of June 1971' (*Tel Quel*) – a text whose two basic points we approve (the revisionism of the PCF and the active recognition of Mao's thought and the Cultural Revolution), although it does not entirely satisfy us in terms of its preliminary analyses – precipitated the development of the contradiction between ourselves and the PCF into an antagonism.

It was at this point that, suddenly, *La Nouvelle Critique* became interested in us. The same day that the declarations of the 'Movement of June 1971' appeared in the *Nouvel Observateur*, we were invited by the editors of *La Nouvelle Critique* to attend an urgent meeting (three days later) to 'consider possible forms of collaboration between our two magazines'. We interpreted this proposal from the outset as an attempt at division, playing *Tel Quel* against its 'allies'. In fact, during this meeting we were offered nothing less than an interview in the pages of *La Nouvelle Critique*. Despite such evident goodwill, most of the discussion concerned disagreements and criticisms from us, bearing on both general issues (the Party's position on China, its cultural politics) and specific points concerned with our own practice (notably the attacks we had just received from the Party press). To all our questions we received the expected casual responses. On the cultural field we heard fine words, promises that things would change, purely formal pseudo-Leninist autocritiques (negligence, laziness, lack of time – in brief, emphasis on personalities: nobody is perfect, but . . .). As for China, not a word was uttered concerning the imminent appearance of the article on 'Western Sinophilia', and we were assured that the Party, because of its serious Marxism-Leninism, refused to judge the Chinese experience as long as it lacked objective information about the forces of production in China.

Those interested can read the letter that we sent to *La Nouvelle Critique* refusing their proposition (published as an appendix to the present article).

In order to attack us and in the face of an ever-growing number of intellectuals who are stepping out of its ranks to denounce it and struggle against it, revisionism will doubtless invoke the 'instability' of petit-bourgeois intellectuals seen as incapable of resolving the strong contradictions of monopolistic state capitalism without 'neurotic revolutionism', opposing the stability of its own position to our 'oscillations', and so on. (This has already begun: see the letter from *La Nouvelle Critique*.) Revisionism's self-evaluation as 'stable' (we shall not pursue the question of our 'neurosis') is justifiable and false at the same time.

It is justifiable because it is true that no profound transformation, no rupture, no qualitative change has occurred in the Party's political line during recent months that might justify some sudden revelation as to its revisionist nature. (Further, any denunciation of the Party would reveal an insufficiency of analysis if it invoked as fundamental cause some event from the last few months.)

But the idea is false none the less, because the Party's extremely *coherent* and *consistent* line has produced, in recent months, a number of actions, discourses, and practices (which are only the *accentuation* of the old line, and in no way contradict it). What is involved is just the increasingly massive and visible *effects* (which will grow sharper) of a line which has not changed fundamentally and which the evolution of contradictions within global and national imperialism will cause to become more and more *visibly* revisionist and repressive (and not *suddenly* revisionist and repressive). It is only in this sense that one may say that things have changed. Since this summer, profound transformations on an international scale, brought about by China's foreign policy, its receiving its rightful place in the United Nations, and the resultant shift in the world balance of power, have provoked the intensification of a smear campaign against that country (overdetermined by the PCF's unreserved support of social-imperialism). At the national level, the PCF's 'electoralist' position (working with legislators, possible co-operation with reformist groups, an ever more frenetic campaign to woo the petit-bourgeoisie) brings about, secondarily, a shift of the Party's cultural line to these eclectic positions with their exclusively reactionary extensions.

We would say, then, that in terms of just the 'cultural' level it is impossible for antagonistic contradictions to appear in the heart of the PCF between, say, a faction favourable to the avant-garde and an academic, regressive, bourgeois, university tendency. It is even less conceivable that the former group could shift from being dominated to a position of dominance, since the reason for the current balance of forces is to be found not in the cultural domain but outside it – determined by the political line of revisionism's precarious alliances (see below). Similarly, it is illusory to attempt to defend 'Chinese politics' either within the Party or from the outside with the hope of having the least effect (concerning frank and open discussion, the revisionists are willing, if need be and for a short while, to let one say one's piece); that is, without understanding that the political line of the French Communist Party forbids consideration of that of the Chinese Communist Party (and implies a fierce struggle against it) because the latter is a 'line' defined by mass struggle against, precisely, the revisionism of the former.

Translated by Alan Williams

Notes

1 Both the texts referred to are in *Cahiers* 233.

2 After the majority of the *Cahiers* editorial board took up its anti-revisionist position, the only Communist Party member of the board, Bernard Eisenschitz, resigned from the magazine. (Authors' note.)

3 See Ch. 16 in this volume.

4 They have, in common with revisionists and with the bourgeoisie, abused Lenin's analysis. If in fact leftism is a specific deviation from Marxism, then the anarchistic infiltration of certain sub-groups in the May 1968 movement by *non-Marxists* ought to prompt an analysis for which the current notion of leftism is an ideological cover. (Authors' note.)

5 It is symptomatic that this text is practically the only one from *Cahiers* – with the exception of those dealing with the recognized 'cultural values, of the Vertov, Eisenstein or Griffith kind – that has been spoken well of in the Party press. (Authors' note.) The text is translated in this volume, Ch. 4.

6 Suffice it to note what we thought of the films extolled by the Party press, such as those of Chabrol, Sautet, etc. It is significant that, for example, in our analysis of the journalistic response to *Tristana*, we prudently remained silent about the Communist daily papers' reactions, which were none the less as symptomatic and reflected the same ideology as the body of texts analysed. The same goes for those magazines (*Positif*, *Jeune Cinéma*, etc.) who fantasized our relationship with the Party as one of obedience and organic connection. Such attacks, quite obviously, did nothing to help us arrive at our present position: i.e., further away than ever from that of those who attacked us in this way. To struggle against the bourgeoisie and against revisionism is also ceaselessly to criticize the muddle of surrealist, Hollywoodesque, pseudo-working-class leftism. (Authors' note.)

7 But although we were extremely prudent about criticizing the PCF, it is to be noted that on the contrary the Party press – daily, weekly, and monthly – did not refrain from attacking us at least as much as it had during the period of *Cahiers'* anti-Marxism. (Cf., among many feeble attacks, that of Cervoni at Avignon in 1970 and our own measured response in *Cahiers* 223; as well as, obviously, Lebel's articles in *La Nouvelle Critique*, beginning in June 1970.) (Authors' note.)

8 Ch. 13 in this volume.

9 The party intellectuals understood this well: afterwards there was hardly a mention of even the names of the three magazines in the Communist press without an insistent reminder of this manifesto. (Authors' note.)

10 In the interview with *Politique-Hebdo* (*Cahiers* 229) we mentioned, among the attacks launched at us from various quarters, those of the 'eclectic social-

democrats', a way of speaking (still cautiously and obliquely) of what we could no longer, at that point, not think of as *revisionism.* In keeping with the same revisionist concept of revisionism, we published in July (*Cahiers* 230) a text on censorship by a group of Communist film-makers – as if there were *none the less* some positive things to be drawn from an analysis performed by revisionists.

(The formulation 'eclectic social-democrats' was, moreover, not merely cautious but dangerous. 'Social-democratic' is appropriate if one speaks strictly of the Party's objectives, but not if one speaks of its organizational structure. [It is Trotskyism that considers the PCF as a social-democratic type of party, and this is completely false.] The Party, for example, practises a democratic centralism which is certainly very specific but completely opposed to the 'liberalism' of social-democratic organizations.)

Analogously, concerning *Cinéthique* no. 9/10, we held to a schematic and abstract analysis of their political stance not, as they maintained in their issue no. 11/12, out of an inability to criticize it concretely, but out of fear that their non-dialectical position might furnish weapons to revisionists. 'Let us make it clear,' we said, 'that it cannot be a question of giving arms to reactionaries – be they of the right *or of the left*': this was to indicate, still obliquely, where we saw the attacks coming from – revisionism. (Authors' note.)

11 Cf. Albert Cervoni and François Maurin, interviewing J.-P. Lebel in *L'Humanité* (28 September 1971): 'To what degree is your book a part of the reaction against a hyper-theoretical attitude that has recently developed in several magazines, for example *Cahiers* or *Cinéthique*?' And further on: 'What seems to me quasi-metaphysical in these magazines' attitude is the affirmation that cinema should be materialist because it is the most material of all the arts.' (*Sic.* Our readers may judge the seriousness of Cervoni and Maurin's reading of *Cahiers.* And it continues:) 'In other words, they reduce materialism to the notion of physical and chemical materiality.' These accusations, grotesque but very serious, were not backed up – and for good reason – by any quotations or analysis.

On the question of 'leftism', cf. the article from *L'Humanité-Dimanche* reproduced in *Cahiers* 231, or Cervoni's review of the Avignon festival in *France-Nouvelle,* 4 October 1971, which called the supporters of *Luttes en Italie* (that is, *Cahiers,* who introduced the film) 'leftists'. (Authors' note.)

12 Not to mention an article like 'The New Maoists' (*France-Nouvelle,* 13 October), where one may read, as the whole judgement of the Cultural Revolution: 'This aberration sets up voluntarism as capable of changing mental superstructures, even though it is admitted that the true problems of creating socialism in China have not been correctly posed, much less resolved.' For a long time the PCF justified (and continues to justify) its 'silence' on the subject of China by a 'lack of information'. Is this the same lack that authorizes such definitive judgements, again without the shadow of a proof? (Authors' note.)

Appendix 1

Guide to *Cahiers du Cinéma* Nos 210–239, March 1969–June 1972, in English translation

There is no comprehensive record of material from *Cahiers du Cinéma* which has been translated into English. This appendix offers, both for further reading and as a research resource, a tentative listing of such material. (This listing does not include material translated in full in this volume.) As compared with the material listed in Volumes 1 and 2, relatively little appears to have been translated from the period of *Cahiers* covered by this volume. The editor would welcome additional entries from readers.

BONITZER, Pascal
See under Rohmer (*Cahiers* 219)

CAHIERS DU CINEMA
'Young Mr Lincoln, de John Ford' in *Cahiers* 223 (August-September 1970) trans. as 'John Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln*' in *Screen*, vol. 13, no. 3, Autumn 1972; reprinted in *Screen Reader 1*, London, Society for Education in Film and Television, 1977; in Nichols, B. (ed.), *Movies and Methods*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1976; and in Mast, G. and Cohen, M. (eds), *Film Theory and Criticism*, New York and London, Oxford University Press, 3rd ed., 1985.

COMOLLI, Jean-Louis
'Cinéma/Idéologie/Critique' (with Jean Narboni) in *Cahiers* 216 and 217 (October and November 1969)
trans. as 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism' in *Screen*, vol. 12, no. 1, Spring 1971 (part 1), and vol. 12, no. 2, Summer 1971 and vol. 13, no. 1, Spring 1972 (part 2); reprinted in *Screen Reader 1*, London, Society for Education in Film and Television, 1977; part 1 reprinted in Nichols, B. (ed.), *Movies and Methods*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1976; translation of part 1 reprinted in this volume.

See under Rohmer (*Cahiers* 219)

'Technique et Idéologie (1): Caméra, perspective, profondeur de champ' in *Cahiers* 229 (May-June 1971)
trans. as 'Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field' in Nichols, B. (ed.), *Movies and Methods*, vol. 2, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1985; a slightly revised version of this translation is reprinted in this volume.

DANEY, Serge
See under Rohmer (*Cahiers* 219)

GROUP LU HSUN
' "A armes égales": Analyse d'une émission télévisée' in *Cahiers* 236–7 (March-April 1972)
trans. (abridged) as 'On Equal Terms – Analysis of a Television Programme' in Caughie, J. (ed.), *Television: Ideology and Exchange*, London, British Film Institute, 1978.

KOZINTSEV, Grigori
'Le Manteau' in *Cahiers* 220–1 (May-June 1970)
trans. as 'The Overcoat' in Christie, I. and Gillett, J. (eds), *Futurism, Formalism, FEKS*, London, British Film Institute, new ed., 1987.

NARBONI, Jean
'Cinéma/Idéologie/Critique' (with Jean-Louis Comolli) in *Cahiers* 216 and 217 (October and November 1969)
trans. as 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism' in *Screen*, vol. 12, no. 1, Spring 1971 (part 1), and vol. 12, no. 2, Summer 1971 and vol. 13, no. 1, Spring 1972 (part 2); reprinted in *Screen Reader 1*, London, Society for Education in Film and Television, 1977; part 1 reprinted in Nichols, B. (ed.), *Movies and Methods*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1976; translation of part 1 reprinted in this volume.

See under Rohmer (*Cahiers* 219)

'Introduction à "Poetika Kino" ' in *Cahiers* 220–1 (May-June 1970)
trans. (slightly abridged) as 'Introduction to *Poetika Kino* in Christie, I. and Gillett, J. (eds), *Futurism, Formalism, FEKS*, London, BFI, new. ed. 1987.

OUDART, Jean-Pierre
Conclusion to 'Young Mr Lincoln, de John Ford' in *Cahiers* 223 (August-September 1970)
trans. in *Screen*, vol. 13, no. 3, Autumn 1972; reprinted in *Screen Reader 1*, London, Society for Education in Film and Television, 1977; in Nichols, B. (ed.), *Movies and Methods*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, Univer-

sity of California Press, 1976; and in Mast, G. and Cohen, M. (eds), *Film Theory and Criticism*, New York and London, Oxford University Press, 3rd ed., 1985.

'Le hors-champ de l'auteur' in *Cahiers* 236–7 (March-April 1971)
trans. as 'The absent field of the Author' in Caughie, J. (ed.), *Theories of Authorship*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul/BFI, 1981.

ROHMER, Eric
'Entretien avec Eric Rohmer' (by Pascal Bonitzer, Jean-Louis Comolli, Serge Daney, Jean Narboni) in *Cahiers* 219 (April 1970)
trans. (extract) in Williams, C. (ed.), *Realism and the Cinema*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul/BFI, 1980.

Appendix 2

Cahiers du Cinéma in the 1950s, the 1960s and the later 1970s

This volume of material from *Cahiers du Cinéma* covers the period 1969–72. Volume 1, published in 1985, covered the period 1951–9; Volume 2, published in 1986, covered the period 1960–8; Volume 4 will cover the later 1970s.

Volume 1: 1951–9

When *Cahiers* was founded in 1951 it inherited many of its critics (André Bazin, Eric Rohmer, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Pierre Kast, for example) and many of its critical concerns (and even its cover design) from the earlier journal *La Revue du Cinéma*. It was here in the 1940s that Bazin and Rohmer had developed much of their thinking about realism and the evolution of film language, and it was here that American cinema had been championed. These were both crucial components in *Cahiers* in the 1950s: attitudes to Italian cinema – neo-realism and Roberto Rossellini in particular – and to American cinema as a whole are strongly represented in Volume 1. To the *Cahiers* critics – both the older critics and the soon distinctive 'young Turks' François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette and Claude Chabrol – Italian cinema and American cinema offered much that was found to be lacking in contemporary French cinema, particularly an engagement with social reality and an inventive freedom of form. Throughout the 1950s, as *Cahiers* increasingly established its own identity and importance as a journal, its critics engaged in fierce polemics over French cinema, as well as making short films themselves and criticizing cinema very much from the standpoint of future film-makers. Volume 1 thus traces the development, in reviews and discussions, of the *Cahiers* critics to their acclaim in 1958–9 as directors of the so-called *nouvelle vague* or 'new wave'.

The international impact of the 'new wave' films drew much attention to *Cahiers* and in particular to its controversial positions on popular American cinema. These positions – centred around the contentious concept of the *politique des auteurs* (the *'auteur* policy', which became known later in Britain and the USA as the *'auteur* theory') and around associated ideas about *mise en scène* – were to initiate intense critical debate in Britain and the USA, ultimately producing radically changed critical assumptions. As well as general articles on the nature of American cinema, on authorship, on genre and on technological aspects such as CinemaScope, Volume 1 offers a range of *Cahiers* writing on *auteurs* such as Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock, Fritz Lang, Samuel Fuller, with a short critical dossier on Nicholas Ray, one of the American film-makers most revered by *Cahiers*.

Volume 1 seeks to reflect the broad range of critical interests and polemics which characterized *Cahiers* in the 1950s, perhaps its best known and most influential period.

Volume 2: 1960–8

By 1959 *Cahiers* was well established as the major influence in French film criticism. Its polemical positions on American cinema, in particular, had begun to generate enormous controversy in critical circles both in France and elsewhere, notably in Britain. At the same time, there is little doubt that this controversy would not have received the attention it did had the films of the French 'New Wave' not dominated critical attention as extensively as they did in the period from 1958 to the early 1960s. Although by no means all the new French film-makers came from the ranks of *Cahiers* critics, enough important ones – Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, later Rivette and Rohmer – did, and the prestige won by their films forced even critics hostile to *Cahiers* criticism to take their critical interests and judgements seriously. Thus, Richard Roud:

> I wonder how many English critics would have included (in their lists of ten best films of the year) Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, Samuel Fuller's *Run of the Arrow*, Douglas Sirk's *A Time to Love and a Time to Die*, or Nicholas Ray's *Wind Across the Everglades*. One's first reaction might be to conclude that these men must be very foolish. And indeed, until a year or two ago, one might have got away with it. But today it would be difficult, I think, to maintain that film-makers like Alain Resnais, François Truffaut, Claude Chabrol, Jean-Luc Godard, Pierre Kast and Jean-Pierre Melville are fools.[1]

The combination of prestige and controversy brought the circulation of *Cahiers* from around 3,000 in the early and mid-1950s to around 12,000 in the early 1960s and to a peak of over 13,000 in the mid- and late 1960s.

A great deal of the supposed critical 'excess' of *Cahiers* belongs to the early 1960s when Eric Rohmer was largely responsible for editorial policy. It was an excess marked by the growing influence of a group of critics, often identified as 'MacMahonists', after the MacMahon cinema which specialized in American movies, but pulling along with them others on the journal, including Rohmer himself, and shifting the central focus of criticism to an almost abstract conception of *mise en scène* and to a group of newly acclaimed *auteurs*, among whom figures like Joseph Losey, Raoul

Walsh, Fritz Lang, Otto Preminger and Italian epic director Vittorio Cottafavi were pre-eminent. Perhaps out of modesty, but nevertheless surprisingly, relatively little was written about the French New Wave in the early 1960s. Certainly, the interest in European cinema, and particularly Italian cinema, which had been so important in the 1950s now seemed in decline. There is little doubt that these directions of *Cahiers* worried some of its earlier editorial leaders who continued to be associated with the journal. Jacques Doniol-Valcroze and Pierre Kast, for example, both Left or liberal, were concerned about its increasing 'apoliticism', if not its drift to the Right. Godard was arguing in 1962 that no new ideas were coming out of *Cahiers*: 'There is no longer any position to defend . . . Now that everyone is agreed, there isn't so much to say. The thing that made *Cahiers* was its position in the front line of battle.'[2] Jacques Rivette and Michel Delahaye wanted to see more discussion in *Cahiers* of 'new cinema', new cultural theories, politics – directions which Rohmer did not find very sympathetic. In 1963, as a result of these dissatisfactions, an editorial committee was imposed on Rohmer, who was soon after replaced as chief editor by Rivette, who remained there in the period 1963–5.

To be fair, the early 1960s were not in fact as narrow as this account implies. The contents of Volume 2 show that alongside the 'extremist' work on American cinema, there was a growing interest in quite different areas, such as the influence of Bertolt Brecht's work on film-making and film criticism and the developments in *cinéma-vérité* and direct cinema. Such new directions were given considerable impetus, however, in the mid-1960s, with the very conscious encouragement of an interest in current theoretical work in areas like anthropology and linguistics which were relevant to film – represented in Volume 2 by an interview with Roland Barthes. Probably most important was the development of a polemic for a 'new cinema' and for a conscious politicization of criticism. Inevitably, these new directions involved a reassessment of the stance *Cahiers* had taken to American cinema in the past, as well as a recognition that American cinema itself was undergoing significant changes. Certainly, overall, one needs to think of *Cahiers* in this period as beginning to question assumptions which had been fundamental to its earlier views on American cinema: questions about the concept of authorship, questions about the ideological function of American cinema. To be clear, this was not a *rejection* of American cinema, rather a *re-thinking* in the context of a more rigorously political and theoretical critical practice.

Volume 4: The later 1970s

The *Cahiers* project in the later 1970s very much continues and extends the political and theoretical positions elaborated in the post-1968 period, in particular questions around the place of the spectator, from the psychoanalytic work of Lacan, and questions around politics and history arising out of the work of Michel Foucault. The continuing overall commitment to understanding the operation of bourgeois cinema, through systematic re-reading to both films and film history, criticism and theory, was complemented by a commitment to exploring alternatives to bourgeois cinema, whether the deconstructed European cinema of Godard, Straub-Huillet and others or, increasingly important in this period, the 'anti-imperialist' cinema in, for example, Algeria, Palestine, China, Chile. To some extent there was also a re-focusing on French cinema, as *Cahiers* had done in the 1950s, prior to the New Wave, and on the way in which a genuinely 'national' French cinema needed to be understood and generated. In these senses, questions about cinema and cultural struggle remained at the head of the *Cahiers* agenda: what could a radical film journal contribute to political struggle on the cultural front?

Notes

1 Richard Roud, 'The French Line', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 29, no. 4, Autumn 1960, p. 167.

2 Interview with Jean-Luc Godard, *Cahiers* 138, December 1962; trans. in Tom Milne (ed.), *Godard on Godard*, London, Secker & Warburg; New York, Viking, 1972, p. 195.

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